

Everyday Life in a Philippine Sex Tourism Town

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Everyday Life in a Philippine Sex Tourism Town



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Abstract

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Sabang used to be a small, marginalized Philippine fishing village that in the span of three decades became a well-known international sex tourism site. This thesis deals with the implications of tourism (including sex tourism) and how it has become embedded in the daily life in today's Sabang. The thesis highlights the local populations' diverse reactions to the various changes associated with tourism growth, in particular how various symbolic, moral, and spatial boundaries are constructed and maintained.

The ethnographic material examined in this thesis builds on several periods of fieldwork, in total 18 months, that were carried out between 2003 and 2015. Analytical tools found in tourism anthropology and in particular the branch of postcolonial tourism studies has guided the discussion and analysis of the socio-cultural effects of becoming a tourism town.

This thesis argues that complex networks of boundaries are significant in maintaining a sense of order and social cohesion in times of change. Notions of cultural differences are expressed through the narratives and behaviors of the various inhabitants, and contribute to the maintaining of boundaries within and between groups. From the beginning of tourism growth commercial sex has been central and has become a significant factor in the tourism economy. While residents acknowledge their dependency on the go-go bars, the business of the night is framed so as not to defeat the inhabitants' struggles to maintain local community's sense of morality, or at least to set up boundaries between the outsiders' immorality and insiders' morality. Tourism has also offered opportunities to challenge conventional social hierarchies and local seats of power, and there are also recurrent discussions about who has the right to control resources and who can claim entitlement to a place now shared by people from all over the world.

Keywords: Tourism anthropology, Philippines, Sabang, sex tourism, everyday life, gender, community response, social hierarchies, maintaining boundaries, cross-cultural encounters

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For Caren Ceniza Lopez

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1. Introduction

Sabang is a tourism town on the northern tip of the Philippine island of Mindoro. It has undergone dramatic changes since the late 1970s, when it was a poor, marginal fishing community. Since the early 1980s an ever-increasing number of foreigners have found their way to Sabang. A new economy has developed, one that builds on the arrival of mostly male tourists from Europe, the United States, and Australia, but lately also tourists from other parts of Asia, mainly South Korea. The local economy has become dependent on global demand and now relies heavily on foreigners' willingness to spend their vacations in Sabang. The sex industry is an important part of both local tourist activities and local income and employment, mainly for migrants from other parts of the Philippines.

The tourists may be young backpackers on tour in Asia, scuba divers, families traveling on package tours and male tourists attracted to the go-go bars. Sabang's tourism offer two main activities for tourists: Scuba diving and the bar scene, the latter implying the go-go bars and pubs. There are only a few alternative activities offered: one can take organized tours to various sites in the northern Mindoro such as a freshwater waterfall, there is a golf course in the municipality, or one can rent a *banca* (a *banca* is an outrigger boat with bilateral bamboo floats and is the preferred water transportation throughout the islands of the Philippines)¹ for island hopping and snorkeling or rent a motorcycle to get around independently. It is, however, the daytime scuba diving and the nighttime bar scene that constitutes Sabang's primary tourist attractions.

The previous small and tightly knit community has grown greatly, and its inhabitants now originate from all over the world. Although still limited

¹ The official Tagalog spelling is *bangka*, but the anglicized spelling is more commonly used. I will also pluralize *banca* according to English language convention, one *banca* and two *banças*, in accordance to everyday practice in Sabang.

in size, with a population of approximately 5 000 permanent residents, it is a busy little town. Migrants from other parts of the Philippines have relocated to Sabang, as have men from primarily Western countries. The previously fairly homogeneous population has become highly heterogeneous, international, and transnational. The formerly small fishing village has been transformed into a town, where concrete houses, resorts, restaurants, pubs, dive shops and go-go bars abound. The Tagalog word *barangay* is roughly equivalent to “village” or “town.”² *Barangay* Sabang constitutes a part of the municipality of Puerto Galera, in the province of Oriental Mindoro, on the island of Mindoro. *Barangay* Sabang is physically separated from the other 12 *barangays* in the municipality, contributing to a sense of Sabang as a town standing on its own.

For many people, Sabang is a place of great opportunity. Some have been able to make substantial gains from tourism, primarily the 5–7 local large land-owning extended families.³ Expatriates, foreigners who have settled in Sabang, commonly referred to as ‘expats,’ have been able to fulfill their dream of leading a comfortable life in the tropics.⁴ However, not all who may have wished to do so have been able to tap into the potential

2 A *barangay* is technically the Philippine’s smallest administrative unit, often translated as “barrio.” I will use “*barangay*” and “town” interchangeably.

3 A more exact number proved to be difficult to establish. People reported different number of pre-tourism families depending on how far back they could make an estimate. Some family names are reported to be the ‘real’ locals more often than others. Some consider the area that today is central Sabang to be the point of origin for native people of Sabang, while others tend to include areas further away in their definition of ‘real’ locals. It was also difficult for me to access any statistical and historical data on the population of pre-tourism as well as present Sabang. At the statistics office, they explained that a lot of those records had been destroyed during different typhoons throughout the years.

4 The term expat has lately been discussed, in newspapers and on online discussion groups. Some argue that the term expat has association to colonialism as it is primarily white (men) who become labeled and label themselves as expats while people from South America, Asia and Africa become ‘immigrants’ when relocating abroad. The term immigrant is interpreted as being of lesser value. They thus highlight the issue of race, history and class (Koutonin 2015; Orsino 2015). Others argue that the label expat mostly is a question of governmental procedures, related to how work visas are issued (Ossowski 2015). I use the term as it is the one locally used, and the men (and a limited number of women) refer themselves to as expats, rather than immigrants. In this they call upon a connection to their home countries, and they present themselves as being an American, Australian or German expat. The small but growing group of Korean men who have permanently settled in Sabang are here likewise called expats.

rewards of tourism. Migrants from other parts of the Philippines, for example, often find it difficult to penetrate the tourism sector, and tend to remain low-earning and low-status laborers.

There is a conception, perhaps nowadays somewhat academically outdated but still often voiced by many tourists all over the world, that tourist destinations are inauthentic and commercialized. In some ways Sabang can be perceived as a “playa del anywhere” in a “liminoid playground” (Selänniemi 2001, 2003), because the overwhelming majority of activities focus on scuba diving and commercial sex, rather than, for example, on cultural events. But contrary to the widespread view of tourist sites as inauthentic, superficial and commercialized, Sabang is a place where people live, work, and socialize. This, what initially seemed to be a paradox between the superficiality of tourism, especially sex tourism, and the more mundane parts of living, caught my attention, and this thesis is about how tourism and daily life are intricately intertwined and interdependent. Through this thesis project I found out that these two aspects of Sabang, leisure and everyday life, are not separate phenomena, but rather interrelated facets of what it is like to live in a Philippine sex tourism town.

An Ethnographic Study of Tourism

In some respects, Sabang presents itself as a haven for sex tourism, a liminal, sexual paradise for foreign men, while for local Filipinos Sabang is also a place of ancestry, imbued with a strong sense of home and belonging, and where the living of their lives is taking place. It should be made clear that ‘Filipinos’ refers in this thesis to permanent residents and domestic migrants of Filipino origin. ‘Local Filipinos’ will specify Filipinos with pre-tourism family ties to Sabang. ‘Foreigners’ refers to both residents and tourists of foreign origin, mainly Western. These categories are indicative rather than firmly set; for example, the children of foreign fathers and Filipino mothers could be said to belong to both the category of foreigner and Filipino. By ‘locals’ I refer to the inhabitants regardless if the individual is of Filipino or Western origin.

Parts of Filipino and Western locals’ everyday activities take place outside the spheres of tourism. Major transitions in life such as giving birth,

getting married, or dying are seemingly only distantly related to tourism. Even here, the significance of tourism should not be discounted, as the funding for such events may come directly or indirectly from the tourism sector. At times fundraising events are organized to finance a particularly expensive surgery for individuals in need, a wedding between two Filipinos may have an expat as a main sponsor, and the money needed for a burial may come from one's tourism enterprise. Tourism is never far away in the lives of the locals. However, tourism does not rule everything and is not always acutely involved in daily life: people eat their meals, children go to school, and the elderly need to be cared for just as in any other town. Then again, the income generated by tourism offers funds this care of relatives or children's education. Tourism is embedded in a larger socio-cultural, political, and economic local setting.

This thesis highlights how peoples' daily lives in Sabang are connected to a multitude of global processes, but mainly through the international tourism sector, following the thought that "[t]ourism is increasingly recognized as something that cannot be conceptualized as an isolated phenomenon, defined and researched as a separate field of study" (Wood 1997: 4). This is a call for a wider (or holistic) approach that can at least partially be met by an anthropological inquiry. In the same vein tourism scholar Keith Hollinshead (1998: 130) asks for scholars to find expressions of ambivalences and ambiguities on the micro-level – as opposed to the macro level he feels tourism studies have used to study racism, ethnicity, and selfhood – in the smaller details of expressions cultural identity, such as in everyday activities.

Main Research Interest and Questions

In Sabang, a prominent feature of tourist life is commercial sex; Sabang can indeed be labeled a sex tourism destination. However, that is not all it is, and one's understanding of the larger workings of tourism must look at more than just sex tourism. My ambition is thus to set the bar scene in a larger socio-cultural context. The local commercial sex industry is integrated in the local socio-cultural, financial, and political context that I explore throughout this thesis.

Many interpretations of tourism and sex tourism tend to exclude each other. On the one hand, ethnographic studies are often focused either on tourism (see for example Ness 2003; Smith 1978, 1992, 2001; Smith & Brent 2001) or on sex tourism (see for example Brennan 2004a, Clift & Carter 2001; Law 2000; Wiss 2005), as if they exclude each other. These are of course simplifications. None of the authors above mentioned distills commercial sex and tourism from each other or the context, but their focal points are directed at sex tourism or “non-sex tourism,” giving the impression they may be treated as separate entities in themselves. There are of course exceptions to this simplified division, where sex tourism is more explicitly included in the analysis as part of a larger socio-economic and cultural context (Brennan 2004b; Gregory 2007; Lindquist 2009; Williams 2013; Wilson 2004). I place this study in the latter category. While these authors connect sex tourism to larger processes of economic liberalism, and processes of globalization and transnationalization, I will regard Sabang’s global and transnational connections foremost by focusing on how they are manifested on the level of the *barangay*. Also, if one sees tourism as an embedded phenomenon, this highlights how sex tourism an integrated part of Sabang’s tourism scene as a whole.

My main theoretical base is within the general field of tourism anthropology, and with the help of what can be called postcolonial and post-structuralist theorizing in anthropological tourism studies, tourism, and the processes of socio-cultural, political, and financial transformation this town has undergone are analyzed (C.M. Hall & Tucker 2004a; Law 2000; Ness 2003; Wiss 2005). With the help of these I avoid talking about a linear cause and effect in tourism, a way of thinking that may obscure more complex ideas and practices, narratives that contradict the grand narrative, or findings that may be unexpected. Tourism affects the local society in a multitude of ways, but the local society and its various inhabitants in Sabang also react, act, and shape tourism. I try to trace the ambiguities the people in Sabang experience in the face of drastic socio-economic transformations in the wake of tourism development.

My contribution to the anthropological study of tourism is foremost a micro-level analysis of the ambivalences and ambiguities that tourism produces. This study shows how the various locals have reacted and benefited differently, and how tourism at a local level is seen as both something

favorable, but at the same time as acknowledging its drawbacks. Globalization, transnationalism, and international tourism have resulted in the prevalence of a wide array of ideas, people, images, practices, and narratives present in everyday life in Sabang, and I explore how these are experienced by the people in Sabang. For example, in line with postcolonial approaches I question restrictive normative identities in commercial sex, and I highlight how actors directly engaged in commercial sex strive to deconstruct restricting views of themselves as 'immoral prostitutes.' But, viewing tourism as a socio-culturally embedded practice I also show how the local community reconstructs them as such in order to protect their own sense of morality. Moreover, within tourism anthropology scholars often give precedence to the 'local,' often presented as the 'subaltern.' My take on this is to discuss the voices of various groups of Filipino locals and foreigners, not restricting my understanding to one in particular. Cultural representation becomes a question I relate to many categories of locals, not a specific group of either 'host' or 'guests,' as I see that they all are central actors in how Sabang's tourism is shaped.

The interrogation of the different aspects of Sabang's tourism is guided by four sets of questions. The questions in the first set are generally pitched and regard everyday life in Sabang: How do people go about living in an international tourist site in the Philippines? What do my informants point out as most significant aspects of life in a tourist town? Sabang is a thoroughly transnational place, and cross-cultural encounters are part of any ordinary day, so the second set of question asks: What happens in these encounters? How are cultural identities constructed in Sabang? The third theme deals with commercial sex. How is sex tourism manifested in locals' everyday lives? How is commercial sex locally organized, and how do locals deal with the fact that they live in a sex tourism town? And, finally, considering that there has been an introduction and expansion of a tourism economy: How do people in Sabang today manage ownership and control of resources? By whom and how are rights and entitlement to Sabang claimed?

Sabang

Barangay Sabang is located on a peninsula some six kilometers slightly northeast of Puerto Galera town proper. Sabang is further divided into ten *sitios*, areas within the barangay that are not officially regarded as administrative units. Asking a local inhabitant in Sabang where he or she comes from may thus result in the answer: *sitio* Silangan, *barangay* Sabang, the municipality of Puerto Galera, the province of Oriental Mindoro, the island Mindoro, and the country the Philippines. Sabang is a coastal community and the shore line's main features are the three coves: Sabang Beach, Small Lalaguna, and Big Lalaguna. The three coves were previously separated by high cliffs, but a walkway has been constructed along the foot of the mountain between Sabang Beach and Small Lalaguna, and stairways climbing Mount Tralala now connect Small Lalaguna and the most western cove, Big Lalaguna. Sabang is a rather small place: it only takes about 30 minutes to walk from the western side of the *barangay* to the eastern one.

The beaches are narrow, and only a rather thin stretch of flatland is available between the shore and the mountainside. The mountainous terrain creates natural borders separating Sabang from its neighboring *baran-*



Map of Puerto Galera

gays. The main road leading to the town proper acts as a central junction, and the *barangay* spreads to the east and to the west along the shore from the main road. Central Sabang (by Sabang Beach) is the only area that can be accessed by car; to get to the other *sitios* one either goes by foot along the dwindling, cemented pathways, or on the beach or by *banca*. The local *Barangay* Council estimated that only 30% of the total land area is used for housing and tourism. The remaining areas consist of swampland or are deemed too mountainous for commercial use (Barangay Profile 2006). Sabang gives the impression of being cramped, and one report notes that of the municipality's *barangays* with a focus on tourism are significantly more densely populated, with an average of 307 inhabitants per square kilometer, than non-tourism *barangays*, with 53 inhabitants per square kilometer (Cola and Hapitan 2004: 17).

Like many tourist towns Sabang is spatially divided, and certain areas are designated for tourist activities and facilities, while locals reside and socialize in other areas. Only a few permanent residents live by the beach, and in those rare cases then often in conjunction with their businesses. The Filipino and expat living areas run along the steep mountainside, in inland parts of Sabang and in the narrow alleyways behind the tourist establishments. The church and chapels, *Barangay* Hall, *turo-turo* (small street-side eateries), schools are also located away from tourist areas and are rarely visited by foreigners. The main tourist areas are set in the lower area along the beach and in the central parts of Sabang. These areas are almost exclusively occupied by the tourism sector: that is where the tourists sleep, move, eat, and seek entertainment in the pubs, go-go bars, and diving shops. The tourist areas are expanding, and resorts are now constructed along the mountainside, with the permanent residents' living areas being pushed further upward and inward.

An ordinary day in Sabang starts early for a majority of the Filipinos, at around 5 in the morning, and people prepare themselves to start up their businesses, to go to work, and school. About 8 o'clock the earliest-waking tourists are expecting their breakfasts. At 9 am the first *banca*s start shuffling divers out for the first scuba dive of the day. At noon lunches are ordered by tourists in the seafront restaurants, and the small eateries serve midday meals to Filipinos. A second round of scuba diving is also undertaken. In the hottest hours of early afternoon, tourists go to relax

at the beach or in their hotel rooms. Around 3 pm the third wave of the day's *bancas* filled with divers head out to the dive sites. By 5 pm the town is preparing for the night. Filipinos return home and stop to shop for the ingredients for dinner at the market. The communal transportations cease running for the day, such as *bancas* for the country's main island Luzon or *jeepneys* (small bus-like vehicles)⁵ for the central town of the municipality. During the day Sabang is a sleepy, quiet little village in the tropics, with palm trees lining the beaches. But at nighttime the central parts of Sabang come to life. At 6 pm a few *bancas* may leave shore to take a couple of divers for a night dive, though diving is primarily a daytime activity. By then foreign residents and tourists have already started gathering in their preferred watering holes, their favorite pubs. Around 7 pm, when it's already dark, the six go-go bars in the central areas open, with broken loudspeakers loudly playing rock ballads of the 1980s. Until 1-2 am the nightlife dominates the town: music is playing, and tourists and bar girls occupy the paths of central Sabang. For those not yet ready to go home, there are a couple of bars which are open 24 hours: It's a *barangay* of activity throughout the hours of the day.



The ideal image of a paradise-like beach that many tourists desire.

⁵ *Jeepneys* function as the main means of land transportation for medium distances throughout the Philippines, and are widely considered to be a national symbol of Philippine ingenuity. Originally *jeepneys* were converted American jeeps (Willys jeeps), which were surplus from World War II.

The People of Sabang

In 2006, the *Barangay* Council conducted a local census and found the permanent population of Sabang was 4 086. More recent estimations have been difficult to come by, but I estimate that the population has grown by roughly 1 000 since then. The *Barangay* Council reports a majority of the population is classified as Tagalogs, 80%, approximately 600 (15%) as Foreigners (i.e. expats), and 5% as Visayan (from the central islands of the Philippines).⁶ Furthermore, 90% of the population are recorded as Roman Catholics, and the remaining as members of various protestant churches and movements such as Born-Again Christians, the Iglesia ni Cristo, or Seventh Day Adventist (Barangay Profile 2006). It is doubtful that the expat population is included in this estimation of religious affiliation. The Western expats generally consider themselves atheists or non-practicing Protestants, and only a few are members of the Catholic Church, and then often through marriage: religious activities or issues are rarely central in their identity or daily life. I do not know the private religious affiliations of the Korean expats, with the exception of the Korean principal of a local Catholic private school. Teachers at an English school for Korean children in the municipality also reported to me that the Philippines had been the Korean parents' choice of destination for their children as they had wished them to study English in a Christian country.

There are no available statistics on the number of tourists who visit Sabang specifically, but the municipality of Puerto Galera received approximately 150 000 tourists yearly in the late 2000s (PGIC 2010: 5). The peak season runs from November to April, and during that time Sabang may host up to 500–1 000 (or sometimes more) tourists on any given day. During the extreme peaks – Christmas, New Year's, and Easter, almost all hotel rooms may be occupied. In official records, Sabang had 775 rooms for tourist accommodation in 2008, and the rooms tend to be fitted with

⁶ The number of expats may have grown since this estimation, but my impression is that this was roughly the number of expats in Sabang also later. Expats may not always be officially permanent residents, since many stay on tourist visas. These visas can be extended for up to a year (and beyond that if you have connections), which can be renewed by leaving the country temporarily and enter again and then stay for another year, and then this procedure can be repeated indefinitely.

a bed for two. The number of rooms in Sabang constituted almost half of the total number of rooms in the whole of the municipality of Puerto Galera. Sabang also hosted 301 “commercial establishments devoted to the local tourism industry” such as restaurants, dive shops and souvenir shops (PEMSEA 2008: 17). During the low season, however, and in particular during the rains and typhoons, the number of tourists drops significantly. In off seasons, rooms are offered at a reduced price, and the smaller resorts take on long-term tourists. Restaurants, pubs and resorts tend to reduce the number of employees. Though the shifts between peak season and off season is felt, diving is carried out throughout the year, and the go-go bars continually attract tourists, so Sabang rarely is without tourists. Although white Western men continue constitute the norm, the number of female tourists has increased since the late 2000s, particularly since Korean tourists have been coming to Sabang. Korean tourists often arrive on package tours, and the gender distribution tends to be more even among those tourists on package tours than among tourists traveling independently.

Tourists’ length of stay varies greatly, from a few days to several months. Some of the tourists I met were first-time visitors to Sabang, while others were repeat tourists who spend most of the year in their home countries, but visit Sabang yearly; this category of tourists has become incorporated into the residing expat community.

Many expats run businesses such as resorts, restaurants, diving shops, or pubs. Others spend their senior years living in Sabang, often financed by their retirement or disability funds, while others work at diving shops for extended periods of time. The expats tend to identify themselves as expats, while the Filipinos tend to use the term *Kano*, short for *Amerikano*, when referring to them – a term which is generally used in the Philippines for all white foreigners regardless of their nationalities, or foreigners are simply called “tourists.” Asian tourists are locally similarly increasingly labeled “Korean,” reflecting the recent rise in the number of Korean tourists.

The backgrounds of the expats are varied. Many of the expats I came to know had a history of working as manual laborers such as in construction or industry. Others, although in my estimation fewer, had some degree of secondary education, and only a limited few had any previous

experience of running their own enterprises. What was striking was that many were already experienced travelers when they first visited Sabang on vacation. Expats told me almost unanimously that they saw their migration as a way of escaping the stressful and demanding lives they lived in the West. In Sabang they found that they could combine their interests with making a living, and simultaneously live on a tropical beach and lead a leisurely lifestyle. For those who owned restaurants or pubs, partaking in the tourists' leisure activities, and having a few beers and a chat with them, was an important part of their jobs. The blurring of the division between 'work' and 'leisure' was stated to me as a highly sought after aspect of life, and the expats' move to Sabang can be seen as a form of "lifestyle migration" (Benson & O'Reilly 2009; O'Reilly 2000).

A vast majority of the expats I came to know have Filipina wives or girlfriends, who generally are either local women or former bar girls. Few ex-pats learn Tagalog or get involved in local politics, culture, and customs or religious activities to any significant extent. Socializing with other foreigners is prioritized, and the expats form a community of their own. Their main meeting grounds are the pubs or diving shops. For pub and restaurant owners, it is of vital importance to maintain good relationships with the expats: tourists may come and go, but expats are their most reliable customers. Activities are arranged, such as a weekly Hash Run (an international phenomenon, where members run or walk a different route each week, but main components are socializing and drinking alcohol), a regularly held Senior Citizens' Dinner, a monthly male-only pub crawl, or trips to other beaches.

Local Filipino families trace their roots to pre-tourism Sabang, when the community was inhabited by a limited number of large extended families. These locals claim rightful deep roots in Sabang: they take pride in being the 'real' inhabitants of Sabang. Although the older generations remember growing up with scarce resources, many members of the original families have been able to acquire significant wealth through tourism and now live comfortably. Their children have opportunities and comforts they didn't have as children, such access to education and health-care, and as a steady income through their enterprises. These families have also maintained control of the local politics. Very few outsiders are represented as members of the *barangay* council, or in chief positions in the

organizations associated with influence, such as Church organizations, the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), or tourism organizations.

There are also those Filipinos who migrated to Sabang before the growth of tourism. They form of sub-group of the 'old' locals. They are considered established members of the community by the local Filipinos, and many families have lived there for several decades and have intermarried with the local population. However, these families have generally not been able to access the tourism sector to the same degree as the 'old' locals. The most attractive land areas were already occupied or too expensive, which has prevented them from opening businesses in what today are convenient locations. However, through inter-marriage, no sharp distinction can be made between the 'old locals' or 'less old locals.'

With the growth of the tourism sector, domestic migration to the municipality of Puerto Galera and Sabang increased. Migrants come from various parts of the Philippines, predominantly from poor areas of Manila, Bicol, Cebu, Samar, Mindanao, or the province of Batangas, which serves as the main gateway to Mindoro. Migrants told me that they learned about Sabang by word of mouth and chose to resettle there in the hopes of making a better living in the tourism industry. The migrants usually live outside Sabang, as the cost of rent and living in Sabang is too high for most of them. A tourist town such as Sabang offers plenty of opportunities for self-employment through small-scale enterprise, driving a *tricycle* (Filipino version of a tuk-tuk) or a *jeepney*, which are male occupations. Both men and women may take up souvenir vending on the beach. Women may also offer services such as massages or manicures on the beach or work with commercial sex. The migrants occupy the lower-income and low-status jobs with little skills and education required. The women working with commercial sex are often considered 'the lowest of the low' in terms of social status and are not granted access to other Filipinos' lives. Only a handful of migrants, typically young college-educated women, have gained employment in more managerial, high-paying and high-status positions, such as resort accountants or managers, doctors, or bank employees. Generally, however, migrants constitute the lower class and laborers and are not granted access to local power positions in politics or social organizations.

Sabang is thus a pluralistic and complex society in terms of popula-

tion, not one consisting merely of the stereotypical categories of hosts and guests, but one in which several notions of identities, practices, and social categorizations and hierarchies coexist. Tourism has been instrumental in re-shaping the local demography.

Tourism

Tourism is something very far-reaching, involving billions of people yearly. The international statistics for international travel are astounding.⁷In their report *UNWTO Tourism Highlights 2016 Edition*, the World Tourism Organization estimated that in 2015 the worldwide number of international tourism arrivals reached 1.2 billion, and the same tourism was calculated to be generating a staggering USD 1.5 trillion.⁸ France, the leading tourist destination in the world in terms of tourist arrivals, receives almost 85 million tourists a year. In the same report it was estimated that the Philippines the same year received a comparatively humble amount of 5.4 million tourists (UNWTO 2016). International tourism involves a massive movement of people, not only by the tourists who travel but also people who move in order to work within the labor-intensive tourism sector. Tourism, scholars point out, involves the movement of a wide array of phenomena, such as capital, materials, performances, ideas, images, technologies, and information (Hannam, Butler & Paris 2014; Sheller & Urry 2004).

Present-day mass tourism practices are, for example, not seen as the only forms of travel, since travels and trade are “ancient endeavors” (Forshee 1999: 3) and not isolated from other travel practices (Forshee 1999: 3; Nash 1996: 11; Wood 1997: 4). Throughout time people have traveled and had cross-cultural encounters; however, the organized manner of commercial traveling on a massive scale we find today is unprecedented.

⁷ Domestic tourism is not included in these statistics.

⁸ The standard international technical definition of a ‘tourist’ is the so-called 24-hour definition. In this definition, a tourist is a person who travels away from home and spends at least 24 hours and a maximum of just short of a year at the destination (M.C. Hall 2005: 16). The purpose can be for leisure, business or for other activities such as visiting friends and relatives. This definition thus identifies the destination as *away from home* and the *temporary* character as central components of the tourist. This definition has been argued to be an unnecessarily blunt statistical instrument, ignoring for example domestic tourists, and insufficiently useful in dealing with travel patterns not aligned to leisure travel, such as travel of medical or military personnel (Sharpley 2003: 19f).

Both within academia and in everyday speech we often talk of a tourism industry, tourism economy, or tourism sector. However, tourism involves a wide array of mechanism, actors, and interests such as travel agents, resorts, transportation, commercials and so forth, some not directly apparently linked to tourism, such as industrial production of components for construction. The concept of a tourism industry can thus be seen as an umbrella term for complex system interconnected components involved in the production of tourism, but one that essentially is a human activity involving mobility in one way or another (Abram & Waldren 1997: 2; Ness 2003: 9). Tourism involve people who travel, people who receive them, people who work with tourism, people who sell souvenirs or work as tour guides. Not all must be directly involved in encounters with tourists, for example the people who make the souvenirs or grow the vegetables that are served, but essentially: tourism involves people in many ways. Tourism can also be viewed as an embedded phenomenon, found at many levels: locally, nationally, and globally, as well as in many areas of human life, such as in local and global economies, different societal structures and cultural preferences. Or as the sociologist Robert E. Wood (1997: 20) notes: "Tourism always enters a dynamic process of historical change involving many actors. Tourism both introduces new actors and provides preexisting actors with a range of new opportunities and constraints."

Philippine Tourism Development

Sabang's tourism development needs to be placed in the context of national tourism development. Political Scientists Linda Richter, who has written extensively on Philippine tourism development, puts it simply: "The Philippines has never lacked tourism potential, only tourists" (1999: 41). Richter's quote sums it up quite effectively, but I wish to provide more of a context. The first efforts to form a national program to tap into the growing and promising tourism industry in the late 1930s were interrupted by World War II and not re-established until some 20 years later (Richter 1982: 112). A lack of comprehensive programs for tourism advertisement, providing suitable tourism infrastructure such as transportations and accommodations, and difficulties in gathering competence un-

der one roof continued to hamper the country's tourism development. It wasn't until 1973 that the Department of Tourism (DOT) was created, a year when the country received roughly 243 000 tourists (Cruz 2000: 28). The Department of Tourism's primary functions are to develop tourism policies, and function as a promotional and regulatory asset.

Tourism was – and still is – a high-profile area in Philippine national politics. Developing the tourism sector was, for example, one of President Marcos' (President 1965-1986) flagship projects. The First Lady Imelda Marcos had several excessive so-called 'pet projects' to show off an elegant and wealthy side of the Philippines for international high-end visitors (Richter 1989, chapter 3; 1996). The monumental Philippine International Convention Center (IPCC), the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) and the Manila Film Center were projects under the supervision of Imelda Marcos. A sand beach was constructed in the Manila Harbor – although the water itself was too polluted to swim in – in time for an international film festival in 1981. Neither the costs nor the source of funding of several of these constructions was ever made official (Richter 1982: 121f). These attempts were heavily criticized, and the emphasis on high-end tourism was considered as a "propaganda gimmick" for the Marcos' couple, rather than consolidated attempts to attract tourists on a broader scale (Reider 1997: 223). In response to the lavish spending, several of the Marcos-era luxury hotels suffered from arson attacks in the 1980s, in what was called the Light-a-Fire movement (Ness 2005: 119), in protest against the government. However, these edifices were not destroyed and continue to symbolize the corruption and excessive use of national funds of the dictatorship.

The international, as well as domestic, image of the Philippines during the years under martial law (1972-1981) as lawless, violent, and corrupted had adverse effects on the country's tourism industry. The number of tourists arriving in the country remained relatively low, and in 1983 with the assassination of Benigno Aquino, a political rival, there was a significant decline in tourist arrivals. The following People Power revolution in 1986 resulted in the ousting and escape of the Marcos couple to Hawaii, and with the successor Corazon 'Cory' Aquino as the new president, renewed efforts to attract international tourists emerged. The old slogan

“Where Asia Wears a Smile” was replaced with “Come and See Our New Philippines” (Reider 1997: 225). The objective was to replace the previous negative images of the Philippines with those of a country with order and democracy, and inhabited by brave people who managed to end a dictatorship by peaceful means. Meanwhile domestic tourism was also identified as a potential stepping-stone for development, and the Aquino administration actively encouraged the Filipino population to travel within the country. However, a general low disposable income for the majority of the population as well as the poor or inadequate infrastructure continues to dampen the growth of domestic tourism (Reider 1997; Rodolfo 2009).

The efforts made in the 1990s to attract international tourists did yield some rewards, and the number of tourist arrivals increased slowly. The tourism industry continued to be susceptible to numerous setbacks, with tourism being sensitive to environmental, political, and financial turbulence. There have been numerous terrorist attacks in the Philippines and in neighboring countries directed at foreigners, flares of avian flu, and political upheavals and economic turbulence, all which scare off tourists. However, in the long run, the number of tourist arrivals continued to grow, albeit at a slower pace than anticipated.

In 1970 approximately 150 000 international tourists arrived in the Philippines; ten years later the number grew to a million. The next decade, due to political unrest, this growth stagnated. However, in 2000 tourism statistics indicated almost 2 million arrivals (Cruz 2000: 28). The previous magic three-million mark of international tourist arrivals, a goal set by the government a few years earlier, was reached in 2007, and the next goal of a million more tourists was reached in 2012, and the number has increased rapidly since then, to 5.4 million in 2015 (UNWTO 2016).

The Department of Tourism has produced more specific promotional campaigns to focus on untapped and emerging tourism markets, such as Japan, China and South Korea. Again, the efforts yielded results, and South Korean visitors topped the arrival statistics, with roughly a million arrivals, making up a quarter of all arrivals in 2013, and they have since continued to constitute the largest category of tourists (DOT 2016). The number of Korean tourists is followed by arrivals from the USA and in falling order Japan, China, Taiwan, Australia, and Singapore, countries that

are core Philippine business partners. Other areas identified as future markets include international medical tourism, domestic tourism, and further development of Asian tourism.

The tourism industry is of significant value to the Philippine national economy, for example through employment opportunities and tourists' consumption of lodging, meals, and souvenirs. Domestic and international tourism in the Philippines was estimated to generate 571 billion pesos (USD 11.4 billion),⁹ and constituted approximately 6 % of the country's GDP in 2011 (NSCB 2012). However, at a general level, the Philippines continues to lag behind its neighboring countries in terms of tourism development and tourist arrivals. Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia are countries that generally offer similar kinds of touristic attractions: warm climate, island tourism, snorkeling and scuba diving, backpacking, adventure travel, and commercial sex. In 2015, Indonesia received approximately 10 million, Malaysia 26 million, and Thailand 30 million tourists (UNWTO 2016). Philippine tourism continues to suffer from lack of an efficient tourism infrastructure, with underdeveloped airports, difficulties reaching a wider audience for promotional campaigns, poorly developed domestic infrastructure, making it difficult for tourists to get around, the country's location in the far eastern part of Asia may discourage some tourists, as well as problems with the country's image. Having the image of being a place of violence, kidnappings, and political instability, the Philippines also has a reputation of being a sex tourism site, a reputation that may have dampened the interest in visiting the country for tourists not interested in the sex scene.

Philippine Sex Tourism Development

The Philippines is today widely known as a popular international sex tourism destination. In questions regarding why some locations or countries become sex tourism destinations while others do not, it has been argued that the existence of a historical aspect and a pre-tourism mode of com-

⁹ In this thesis USD 1 roughly equals 50 Philippine Pesos. The exchange rate has varied throughout the years of fieldwork, and this rate should be regarded as a mean approximation.

mercial sex has been significant in the development of sex tourism (Cohen 1986: 251; McKersher & Bauer 2003: 4; Muecke 1992; Ryan & M.C Hall 2001: 139f). In the case of the Philippines, the general agreement among scholars is that the commercialization of sex was an outcome of the Spanish colonial system, not of an 'indigenous culture' of some sort of exchange for goods or money for sexualized services (Eviota 1992: 37; Ofreneo & Ofreneo 1998: 100). The contemporary widespread sex industry in the Philippines is generally understood to be a result of the international military presence in the area, heightened during the Korean and Vietnam wars (Azarcon de la Cruz 1985; Enloe 2000; Eviota 1992; Lim 1998; Moselina 1978; Ryan & M.C Hall 2001; Sturdevant & Stoltfuz 1993; Truong 2001). Throughout the years of U.S. military presence in the independent Philippines (1946-1991), the military bases were a highly debated issue. A year after Philippine independence from U.S. colonial rule in July 4, 1946, a Military Bases Agreement (MBA) was signed, giving the U.S. territorial rights to maintain its military presence in the country, in exchange for assistance in the defense of the Philippines in case of need, and the training of Philippine troops. The agreement also included a 99-year lease, and with the development of approximately five major and fifteen minor military facilities. As a result, the Philippines became the center of American military operations in Southeast Asia. With increased military conflicts in both the Philippines and in its neighboring countries and in particular during the Korean and Vietnam wars the presence of American troops increased significantly.

Directly outside the main gates of the two major bases, the Subic Bay Naval Base in Olongapo and Clark Air Base in Angeles, a commercial sex industry thrived, meeting a demand of Rest and Recreation, during the servicemen's time off from military service. The much-contested Military Bases Agreement symbolized, for its critics, a threat to Philippine independence and sovereignty, and the Military Bases Agreement was renegotiated and expired in September 1991. The eruption of the volcano Mount Pinatubo earlier the same year hastened the evacuation of the U.S. Army personnel, and anti-Military Bases Agreement activists jokingly said to me: "Mount Pinatubo managed to accomplish in one day what we've been fighting for for decades." Although the sex industry in Olongapo and Angeles dwindled right after the catastrophic eruption of the volcano,

commercial sex had become an integral aspect of the international image of the Philippine as well as its tourism industry. The sex industry soon recovered, and the infamous Field's Avenue, still the best-known and best-developed sex tourism site in the Philippines, located outside the Clark Air Base in Angeles, was soon bursting with go-go bars again.

President Ferdinand Marcos has been identified as having actively promoting sex tourism as a way of gaining access to international tourism demand (Ofreneo & Ofreneo 1998: 103), and for encouraging the strategic marketing of the Philippines as a tourism destination. The Secretary of the Department of Tourism, Jose Aspiras, reportedly promised tourists "a tanned peach on every beach" in an advertising campaign (Caronan 2005: 42). The reputation of the Philippines as a haven for sex tourists, cemented during the period of the American military bases, has continued with the approval of the national government, perhaps with the exception of Manila Mayor Alfredo S. Lim's highly publicized action in the 1993 when he ordered all go-go bars in Ermita in Manila to close (Ofreneo & Ofreneo 1998: 122). This ban was later declared unconstitutional, and go-go bars were once again prevalent in Ermita. Angeles constitutes today the center of Philippine today's sex tourism scene, but throughout the country go-go bars are found, both those catering to a local Filipino clientele and those for foreigners, but they are kept separated: foreigners and Filipinos patronize different bars.

Tourism to the Philippines is intrinsically connected to sex tourism, both in international image and in practice. One can travel to the country without encountering commercial sex, but I would say that most tourists do meet it in one way or another. In a place like Sabang it is nearly impossible to avoid coming into contact with or seeing the business of commercial sex, as it is a vital and highly visible part of the tourism sector. Commercial sex is interpreted in Sabang as a direct consequence of tourism development. Tourism, in its different forms and its varied effects, has been acknowledge as an area of study by anthropologists, and I now turn to thoughts and interpretations of international travel within what can be referred to as "tourism anthropology."

Anthropological Theories of Tourism

Tourism began to surface as a topic of interest in its own right in the 1960s and 1970s. The anthropologist Malcolm Crick (1989: 310) reckons that the first anthropological study of tourism was Theron Nuñez' (1963) explorative essay of the socio-cultural effects of tourism on a Mexican tourist town, and that the first anthropological conference focusing on issues pertaining to tourism was held in 1974. It was from this conference that the seminal edited book on socio-cultural aspects of tourism was published *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism* (Smith 1978).

Earlier anthropological studies often expressed a hesitation towards a tendency to hail tourism as a springboard to prosperity or “a passport to development” (de Kadt 1979) for poor countries, much promoted by national governments and international organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Instead anthropologists highlighted patterns of domination and exploitation as well as socio-cultural impacts on local cultures, all with the ambition of nuancing the image of tourism as a holy grail for developing countries.

Building on notions of a global order characterized by a dichotomy between a core and periphery, scholars found that tourist sites in the developing countries often act as “pleasure peripheries” to the wealthy tourists, or *The Golden Hordes* (Turner & Ash 1975), generated by the center. The periphery was understood as the center's playground (Britton 1982; Cohen 1972, 1985). Tourism was often depicted as a destructive and inherently neocolonial force, reshaping cultures and landscapes to fit capitalist touristic consumption, or a “form of imperialism” (Nash 1989). These anthropological studies thus primarily aimed at appraising the socio-cultural impacts of tourism in the tourist-receiving communities (Boissevain 1979; Britton 1982; de Kadt 1979; Mings 1978; Smith 1978). Although the anthropologist Robert C. Mings (1978: 341) issued an early warning of a “ban-or-boom tendency” within tourism studies, a warning against viewing tourism either as a solution or as a problem in locals' lives, tourism largely continued to be conceptualized as either a godsend in the shape of a means to development or as a path to cultural disintegration.

However, from the late 1970s and onwards a new conundrum entered the debate, and the main questions were: What is authentic in a

tourism setting? Is it a real culture that the tourists are visiting, or is it merely a staged one? Are the local inhabitants just *playing* being sincere in their displays of cultural traits for the sake of earning money through tourism? Hence, are the tourists fooled when they assume that they have experienced an authentic culture in their travels? For a long time, issues relating to authenticity were at the top of the agenda in tourism (Bruner 1994; Cohen 1988; Harkin 1995; Hughes 1995; MacCannell 1973, 1976; Urry 1990; Wang 1999; Wickens 1994). No definitive answers to the posed questions were agreed upon, but in general tourism scholars have later tended to view cultural exhibitions and performances as at least as a two-way phenomenon, generating meaning to both performers and tourists (see for example Coleman & Crang 2002). The intense focus given to all things relating to authenticity led to scholarly fatigue. Today, when the subject comes up among tourism scholars, such as at conferences dealing with tourism, it is met with a nearly audible collective sigh. Authenticity is still a subject of great concern for many tourists, however. For many, the highlight of their travel experiences is when they get invited into the homes of the locals or get a taste of the 'real' culture of the places they visit (Tucker 1997).

The wish to experience something true and unique continues to be a strong motivator for travel, also in Sabang, but in its particular way. Sabang is a typical beach, dive, and sex tourism site, and the interest in "Filipino culture" in form of cultural performances such as traditional dance shows, music, or arts are not the focus of tourists' interests. However, issues of culture, cultural integrity, and effects of colonialism and postcolonial relations are subjects of interest and debate among Filipinos, tourists, and expats. Filipinos and foreigners alike are in a sense concerned with the authenticity of Filipino culture – or with identifying a lack thereof. Although authenticity of cultural performances and expressions in the sense the debate suggests may perhaps not be a main motivator for traveling to Sabang, identifying and experiencing the genuinely Filipino is nonetheless an important subject in both tourists' and locals' accounts. Although most tourism scholars may be weary of all things relating to authenticity, it continues to be of concern to the people in Sabang, and not only to tourists. Questions of entitlement, belonging, cultural authenticity, and social

as well as personal integrity are very much at stake in the interactions of people in Sabang, as I discuss in chapter 3, *Local Representations of Cultures*.

After the wave of the authenticity debate had subsided, an interest in examining power relations in tourism anthropology re-emerged. Although phrases such as “Tourists are not participants; tourism is a spectator sport” (Hannerz 1996: 105) continued to be voiced, emphasizing the tourist gaze, anthropologists studying tourism started to point out a general lack of local voices, and blanket assumptions of the negative consequences for host communities. Among other things, anthropologists started arguing for a more balanced understanding of the effects of tourism. These new studies argued against previous interpretations of tourism as a solely destructive force, stating that local populations and minority cultures could gain a voice that had previously been silenced. “Tourism theories that only emphasize the gaze can themselves set the tourist experience in frames, and thereby gloss over what actually takes place in touristic processes and tourists’ interactions with visited environments” (Tucker 1997: 107). A new way of viewing ‘culture’ had entered the understanding of tourism’s potential impacts on local cultures, and there was a realization that all cultures are continuously changing, taking up foreign elements and being redefined (Crick 1989: 336). Scholarly interest came to be directed toward interactions between tourists and places and the lived experiences of the various actors in tourism, such as tourists, local inhabitants, local and national governments, and international agencies.

Determining changes or impacts tourism may or may not have on a particular location is highly problematic, and it is doubtful if they are even possible to assess. Societies undergo transformation with and without tourism, and changes due to tourism may be impossible to isolate from other forces of socio-economic, cultural, political, or environmental change. Changes take place on several levels, and global, national, regional, and local forces may be involved. Furthermore, the anthropologist Donald V.L. Macleod (2004) emphasizes how the processes of change through tourism do not stand uncontested by the locals and argues that they attempt to take control over a force often understood to be uncontrollable. Wood writes:

Clearly tourism - whatever we may think of it – is not a universal juggernaut, flattening everything in its path in the intentional or unintentional service of global homogeneity and uniformity. Study after study has documented how individuals and groups have responded actively to both the constraints and the opportunities brought by tourism development. Outcomes have been extremely varied and often unpredictable. (Wood 1997: 6)

Tourism is thus not something external and isolated from other societal and cultural changes. Today most tourism scholars view tourism as a phenomenon embedded in larger structures of societal transformations and global processes. There has also been a shift from a normative preoccupation to a non-normative, or post-normative, focus in tourism studies (Wood 1997: 3, see also Ness 2003: 22). The anthropologist Sally Ann Ness (2003: 22) argues that a post-normative perspective:

[...] avoids making global judgments on tourism's positive or negative character. I also make a strong division between the industry in general and its specific manifestations in given locations, I defer normative claims about the industry *as a whole* but have adopted normative aspects on the industry's operations with regard to specific cases.

In adopting the concept of a post-normative approach, authors attempt to circumvent a perceived narrow positivistic bias in tourism studies, which tends to focus on macro-economic tourism development. These studies avoid having positivistic ambitions when examining tourism, and they often focus on possibilities of localized expressions of agency without losing sight of global networks (Lanfant 1995: 6f). The idea is that resistance and negotiations are possible within tourism, and tourism is thus not seen as an unstoppable force, but as a complex phenomenon with varied and uncertain outcomes. In striving to implement a post-normative approach, I tried to refrain from starting my study from a point of any overarching judgments of the effects of tourism development, but rather to develop a sensitivity toward people's particular issues and opinions.

Examples of such critical, yet not totalizing, reflections can be found, I believe, in postcolonial tourism studies. In my understanding, postcolo-

nial approaches within tourism studies often can be viewed as expressions of a post-normative stance; however, this is not always made explicit by the authors. Postcolonial theorizing in tourism studies was slow to emerge, and some tourism scholars argue that postcolonial approaches remain in the fringes of tourism research (M.C Hall & Tucker 2004b: 2; Theo 2009: 34). However, in line with a general scholarly critique of essentialist notions of culture, ethnicity, and identity tourism, researchers began re-examining biases implicit in such assumptions.

Postcolonial theorizing in tourism studies seeks opportunities for understanding people's (and places') ambitions to transgress normative and constrictive identities and practices, and these theories show how people may (consciously or not) strategically seek to overcome these constrictions, by creating spaces in-between general social classifications. The approaches inspired by postcolonial theorizing have attempted to move away from previous tendencies of monolithic understandings of core concepts such as culture, identity, and effects and instead highlight processes, ambiguities, and negotiations while continuing to place tourism in a larger historical, socio-political and economic setting. However, the tourism scholar Michael C. Hall and the anthropologist Hazel Tucker (2004b: 15-18) warn tourism scholars against getting stuck in binary categories such as colonizer/colonized, Occidental/Oriental or hegemony/resistance, and note that postcolonial theories may offer more nuanced understandings of tourism, where effects of tourism are viewed as a complex phenomenon and not solely the result of the unilateral (Occidental) tourist gaze. In a sense the interest in postcolonial thought in tourism studies has involved a return to issues of what effects, or consequences, tourism may entail. However, this renewed interest includes evaluations and interest in external forces, but most tourism scholars interested in postcolonial perspectives also avoid making general judgments and overgeneralizations. This perspective is both fruitful and necessary when trying to learn more about tourism and the people involved. My informants in Sabang, for example, were very articulate in their views of tourism, and most of them refrained from engaging in an 'either-or' narrative, rather presenting their views of tourism development in a more nuanced manner and pointing out both positive and less desirable consequences that tourism had had in their lives and in Sabang in general.

Before I go on I want to briefly clarify my position in regards to theories of gender. I view the tourism in Sabang as lived out in a postcolonial setting but rather than directly engaging in a discussion of gender theories I have chosen to approach the issue of gender as expressed through the actions and the narratives and actions of my informants in Sabang. I have been striving to be aware of issues of gender, sexuality, race and power throughout the various steps of the work of this thesis, from choosing informants to how I represent them in writing. The postcolonial critique of the previous narrow focus of feminist thoughts has guided me, in particular the critique of previous focus on the privileged white, educated Western woman (Mohanty 1988, Loomba 128-145; Young 2001: 377f). Thoughts of intersectionality that has followed from the postcolonial critique, where the intersections between for example gender, class, age, ethnicity, sexuality and race are highlighted (Berger & Guidroz 2009; de los Reyes & Mulinari 2005). Power relations between gender, class, race and sexuality become particularly prominent when discussing commercial sex and transnational relationships. Furthermore, this thesis highlights foremost the gendered, racialized Filipina, and to some extent also the Western male tourist, rather than the Filipino male. This is due to the highly gendered nature of international tourism development in Sabang, and to the prevalent racialized exotization and erotization of the Filipina.

Sex Tourism Theories

Sex is widely considered an intrinsic part of hedonistic tourist experiences, a part of the classic five 'S's' of tourism: sun, sex, sights, savings, and servility (Crick 1989). Also, tourism often involves displacement: a person travels for a limited period time, replacing home and the ordinary life with a temporary location, and in this state of liminality, it is generally considered that one often feels free from normal restraints, including sexual inhibitions. This removal from the ordinary setting often allows people to act in a manner they perhaps would not do at home; they escape from daily life and fulfill a fantasy. Sex is an intrinsic part of tourism, largely associated to concepts of liminality in travel, evident for example in tourists' willingness to take greater risks when traveling (Clift & Carter 2000; Ryan

& Kinder 1996). Moreover, destinations are often depicted in eroticized terms (Chambers 2000: 62). Tourism scholars Bob McKercher & Thomas G. Bauer (2003) identifies several factors that facilitate the merging of sex and tourism, and sees that tourism facilitates encounters with other tourists and locals, that the tourism destinations as such are often explicitly constructed with references to love, adventure, romance, and sex. They provide the air or romance, as well as practical opportunities, such as commercial sex, but also rooms, restaurants etc. These tourist places open ways of meeting other people. They also emphasize how the tourism industry as such provides a conceptual context, a setting, and a venue for sex, and how these provide opportunities, such as meeting partners, facilitating encounters for sexual relations.

There are numerous academic approaches to sex tourism. On a general level, studies of sex tourism often center on structural socio-economic context of sex tourism, structures of inequalities, and on flows of Western men traveling to developing countries, and Southeast Asia, and Thailand, in particular (Bishop & Robinson 1998, 1999; Chant & McIlwaine 1995; Leheny 1995, Ryan & M.C Hall 2001; Truong 1990). The researcher in gender and politics Than-Dam Truong (1990) examines the political economy of tourism, tourism researchers Ryan and M.C. Hall (2001) focus on the marginal and liminal position of both tourists and sex workers, and anthropologists and feminist researchers Ryan Bishop and Lillian Robinson (1998) approach the subject by adopting a concept of “sexual alienation.” They all try to capture the complex relationship between stereotypical perceptions of the Asian woman, the development of mass tourism, and its ‘sub-type’ sex tourism, as well as Western men’s motivations to travel to Southeast Asia in pursuit of sex.

There have been attempts to overcome this polarization, and in Philippine research on sex tourism this endeavor has been undertaken by anthropologists such as Lisa Law (1997a, 1997b, 1998, 2000), who has written about sex tourism to Cebu City, and, perhaps more pertinent to my research, also by the anthropologist Rosemary Wiss (2005, 2011). Wiss conducted long-term field studies among bar girls, sex tourists, and expats in Sabang. Wiss did the bulk of her ethnographic fieldwork in Sabang in the mid-1990s, which resulted in the PhD thesis *Tryst Troppo: Sex Tourism, Relationships – Puerto Galera, The Philippines* (2005). She focused on the go-

go bars, the identities and strategies of women working in them.¹⁰ Wiss turns to scholars such as Michel Foucault, with his historical perspective on the production of sexual identities, Judith Butler, with her thoughts on normative heterosexuality and performative aspect of gendered identities, and Jacques Derrida, with notions of repetitions and instabilities (Wiss 2005, chapter 4). Wiss rejects simplified notions of a 'prostitute' as an actual identity of women working in go-go bars. Notions of Asian femininity, Western masculinity, and heterosexuality were made to appear certain, but were in fact ambiguous and subjects of construction and negotiation (Wiss 2005: 162f). Wiss also illuminates how a commercial sex industry is deeply dependent on the support of the local community, for example by providing the necessary infrastructure for the industry to operate, such as local political support (however covert this support may be), socio-cultural parameters in the form of ideas and practices sustaining the locals' senses of moral integrity, and a system of providing illegal drugs for the women. I will expand the field of inquiry to include an even wider approach to the understanding of the embedded character of Sabang's tourism.

As previously mentioned, there is a now body of literature that strives to overcome the dichotomization of tourism versus sex tourism. Several anthropologists have situated sex tourism in the analytical context of increased internationalization, globalization, and transnationalism. Stephen Gregory (2006), Johan Lindquist (2009), Erica Lorraine Williams (2013), and Ara Wilson (2004) all examine globalization in its local forms in the Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Brazil, and Thailand respectively. These studies highlight how local identities, norms, and ideas of race, sexuality, and gender can be traced to larger processes of movement of capital, people, and ideas and that these processes have salience for local practices of commercial sex. Brennan (2004b) likewise grounds her understanding of sex tourism in notions of transnationalism, but she also looks specifically at the effects sex tourism has had on local gender relations in the Dominican Republic. She finds that a gender-role reversal has taken place, where the women now are the breadwinners while the men may flaunt their dependence as a sign of affluence.

A majority of the world's tourists who travel for the pursuit of en-

¹⁰ Wiss is to my knowledge the only anthropologist to have written a more comprehensive ethnography based on fieldwork in Sabang.

gaging in commercial sex are men, but women also do so. This has not gone unnoticed by researchers who have studied female tourists and their intimate interactions with local men for implicit or explicit remuneration in different parts of the world, but mainly the Caribbean (Dahles 1999, 2009; Dahles & Bras 1999; Herold, Garcia & DeMoya 2001; Meisch 1995; Pruitt & LaFont 1995; Sánchez Taylor 2001). In Sabang this practice is virtually non-existent, and the customers of sex are overwhelmingly men. Some of men may pay for homosexual sex (Wiss 2005: 171), but this is not something which is openly talked about. The norm of heterosexuality is very dominant in Sabang's and exceptions rare. I will henceforth refer to male, heterosexual sex tourism when referring discussing the issue in relation to Sabang.

Theories of sex tourism have illuminated how sexual behavior may be altered during times of travel, and that tourist sites often also offer opportunities for sexual encounters. The debate on the position of women who work in the sex tourism sector that locked them into either victims or agents has been questioned, and anthropologists inspired by postcolonial and poststructuralist thought propose that the role and identities of sex workers are much more fluid than previously suggested. Sex tourism continues to be linked to larger structures, and today often to global flows and transnational connections, and anthropologists have increasingly examined how these structures are manifested locally.

Tourists and tourism are generally seen as something superficial and held in low esteem, especially the kind that Sabang offers. But tourism research has shown that there are often complex and intricate connections between the people involved, the tourist sites, images, politics, and the economy. Anthropologists have contributed to this new way of viewing tourism by offering detailed ethnographies of the people and places where this enormous phenomenon that is tourism is manifested in everyday practice. I will show that the interactions, relationships, politics, and notions of cultures are complex and that locally people actively engage in the processes of transformation that tourism has brought about.

Thoughts on Methodology

The first time I visited Sabang was in 1998, and I stayed for a week. At that time, I did fieldwork in the go-go bars of Olongapo, and went to Sabang to see how commercial sex worked in another part of the Philippines. For this thesis, I undertook one longer period of fieldwork in 2006, when I lived in Sabang for eight months. I also did several shorter periods of fieldwork (from a visit over the weekend up to 6 months). Putting all these together, I spent 18 months doing fieldwork in Sabang. On top of fieldwork in Sabang, I've lived in the Philippines for a year and a half, including the nine months I was a Visiting Scholar at the Asian Center, University of the Philippines, Diliman. Between 2002 and 2015 I've visited Sabang almost yearly. While in Sabang I have lived in various types of tourist accommodations, rooms with a small kitchen or in resorts. I have stayed at different locations in Sabang and in lodges and resorts owned by different owners of nationalities, such as Filipino, Swedish, and Korean.

I sought information from a wide variety of sources, but my main sources were qualitative interviews, participant observation of both everyday activities and specific events that I thought would be informative.

Ethnographic studies are often claimed to be suitable for attaining a nuanced understanding of tourism. Anthropologists Macleod and James G. Carrier (2010: 3f) state that anthropological methods and analytical tools are well suited for developing an understanding of socio-cultural aspects of tourism. They argue that by a holistic approach anthropologists can gain insights at various levels, from the specific to the general, the abstract to the concrete. The emphasis on fieldwork further offers "deep" knowledge gained over extended periods of time. The anthropologist Kathleen Adams (2012: 343-436) notes that an ethnographic study may reveal underlying tensions and potential conflicts and unearth topics of sensitive nature. I would like to believe that my periods of field work have done that, given me an insight into the goings-on in Sabang, in particular issues that my informants found to be problematic in this otherwise purportedly desirable development. Tourism has indeed raised many of the inhabitants' living standards, but the processes of transformation have not been seamless.

Sabang was chosen as the site for my research project primarily be-

cause of its relatively rapid tourism growth (over some three decades) and the *barangay*'s limited size. This enabled me to have a broader approach and cover several aspects of tourism, not limiting my study to sex tourism. At first I set out to do research on men who engage in commercial sex while in the Philippines, but in Sabang I found that men buying sex constituted one part of a larger context, and that issues of power, gender, and economic dependency were to be found throughout Sabang, not only in the go-go bars, which led me to reformulate my research project.

When choosing Sabang as a site for fieldwork I aimed for a classical holistic ethnographic approach toward tourism and its socio-cultural manifestations in one specific geo-cultural setting, but with an eye open for the wider global context and transnational connections. Sex tourism would inevitably be included in my study because of its prominence in the commercial sex scene.

Throughout my periods fieldwork I took part in events that mainly Filipinos participated in, such as birthday parties, political meetings, visited schools, a wedding, and a funeral wake, as well as celebrated *barangay* and municipal fiestas, important holidays such as Christmas, New Year's Eve, and Easter with Filipino locals, took a two-day course geared to training hotel maids, and I followed Filipinos in their daily life, such as at a market stall or as a beach vendor. These activities were primarily made accessible to me through my association with my main research assistant: a Filipina from the area. She acted as an invaluable gateway to areas and events that are usually not attended by foreigners. Through her I was able to develop a social network in the Filipino parts of the community.¹¹ I also participated in activities primarily attended by foreigners; for example, I attended a Swedish Christmas dinner, and went on tours together with tourists and to various sights, socialized in the bars: I did ordinary tourist stuff. I talked extensively with many divers and gained some insight into the world of scuba diving, but I did not participate in the actual diving or the social life directly relating to that particular activity. Access to tourists

11 However, as a woman, and mainly working with a female assistant (though during one period of fieldwork I worked with a male assistant), Filipino male spaces were not readily available to me. I met, talked to and interviewed Filipino males, and I spent time with them on family outings, *barangay* fiestas, or in other social events, but otherwise the more private and informal aspects of Filipino male life were largely out of my reach. Filipino men were generally hesitant to talk to me on more personal matters.

and expats, I felt, was rarely a problem, as public spaces such as pubs and restaurants were main arenas for socialization for foreigners.

Some spaces and activities were of course dominated by one group or another, and I was often granted access to a variety of them, either through my being a white woman identified as a foreigner, through my association with my assistant, or through my role as a researcher. My gender, race, and education and the significance these aspects of my person and my position in the local social hierarchy shaped my access to people, activities, and places. In some cases, for example, when doing participant observation in the go-go bars, I would not label my being in the go-go bars as “experience-near” (Agar 1996: 139; Wikan 1991) in that I was mainly an observer, rather than a participant in the bar girls’ work. In other situations, throughout the periods of fieldwork however, my participation in the events was more straightforward, such as when I went on organized tours to popular tour sites: then I sometimes would indeed go native and ‘become’ one of the tourists on the tour. Thus, in regard to my own position, identity, and identification while doing fieldwork, I, like many anthropologists, oscillated between different roles and identities.

Generally, I felt I was a strange feature in the socially heterogeneous Sabang. If I was primarily identified as a foreigner to the local Filipinos, I also often felt that I was not a qualified member of the groups of expats or tourists. Wiss (2005) reports of how people (both expats and local Filipinos) resented her being there, and how they even could be hostile. As an Australian white woman and researcher her presence was unwelcome, largely due to her anomaly in a tourist site dominated by Western males, and for what she represented to them – a feminist critical of their involvement in the sex industry. Some ten years later, when I came to Sabang, the situation seemed to have changed. By then the body of tourists had become more varied, and Western women were then a fairly common sight in Sabang, though we continue to be a minority of visiting tourists. I certainly encountered people who were unwilling to talk to me, but I was not confronted with the hostility the subjects that Wiss reported. Expats and tourists who had long been visiting Sabang talked to me about how they used to be surprised at the presence of female tourists, but that they now had become “more used to them,” as many foreigners said. Furthermore, Wiss focused her studies on the commercial sex industry and was deeply

involved in the lives and activities of a section of Sabang that was not only illegal but also deemed highly immoral and problematic. I too spent part of my field studies in the go-go bars, but I had a wider research interest: tourism and socio-cultural transformations taking place in Sabang. This also led my being known in wider social circles in Sabang, which perhaps made my presence and activities less conspicuous, even when I was spotted by locals entering a go-go bar. Most importantly, I believe, I was not identified by most of my informants as being there to focus on or possibly question the prevalence of commercial sex, but rather as a researcher interested in the less sensitive and broader subject of tourism.



The pubs: a white man's world (with some Filipinas).

Fieldwork in Sabang entailed navigating discourses and practices involving power, privilege, representations of the East and the West, colonial history, and postcolonial relations. Throughout the times I've been in Sabang I've tried my best to be aware of my privileged position as a Western, white, educated researcher, and in the end, I hope, I am someone who speaks through this particular medium on behalf of my informants. Works based in postcolonial tourism thought have called attention to how locals have tended to be silenced, in particular women (Aitchison 2001; Osagie & Buzinze 2011: 211). However, I attempt to give voice to a great diversity of people: local Filipinos, foreign men, and domestic migrants. There is not a specified group of 'them' for me to represent, and hope-

fully I will be able to give this variety of voices room to maneuver, negotiate, concede, contest, and be formulated, and perhaps also heard.¹² The interviews I conducted often took the form of conversations of mutual participation. However, I had an ulterior motive with my conversations – eliciting information for my research project – which my conversation partners did not always share. My status as a researcher was known to my informants and whenever possible candid with the purpose of my stay in Sabang. By this I do not mean that I was a detached researcher, but that I found that my involvement usually was in some way related to my position as a white, Western, female researcher.

Interviewing Techniques

The Philippines is internationally and nationally hailed as a country where people not only speak their native tongues (with Tagalog as the main language) but also English. Most Filipinos I met throughout the country did speak English to a certain degree, as did most foreigners I met. As Sabang is popular among Swedes, I also could speak Swedish with several tourists and expats. The Filipino informants could choose to speak in Tagalog or English, whichever of the two languages they felt most comfortable with. I had studied Tagalog at a language school in Manila and gained a basic understanding of the language. I could carry out everyday conversations and get the general idea of what people were saying in Tagalog. However, I did not learn Tagalog well enough to conduct meaningful in-depth interviews in Tagalog on my own. My main assistant acted, among other things, as a translator during interviews and participant observation with Filipinos. Through my insight into Tagalog I could say a few sentences to encourage Filipinos to speak in Tagalog, rather than in English, which they often

12 Some anthropologists choose to employ the term ‘interlocutor’ rather than ‘informant’ in order to emphasize the *shared* aspects of conversations with their subjects, and see them as co-researchers (Burman 2009; Lundgren 2011: 45f), also aiming at reducing innate inequalities within the relation of informant and researcher. I have chosen to use the more conventional term ‘informant’ as I feel that although my conversations and interactions with people in Sabang were inter-exchanges, my interest in extracting something from these conversations in some ways still set the parameters for them, and I held the power to analyze them.

tended to do in order to accommodate a foreigner like me. I conducted 60 in-depth and recorded interviews with Filipinos and expats. The majority of the informants in the recorded interviews were with Filipinos, and only five of the informants in these recorded interviews were male expats. I had access to expats and tourists through more informal means and could have repeated conversations with them, in particular in the pubs. In total I interviewed 31 women and 20 men. One individual was interviewed three times, and eight were interviewed two times, but the majority once. I did, however, meet most of the people I interviewed in this manner several times and had a chance to talk further with them.

The recorded interviews were prearranged, qualitative, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions (Kvale 1997). In these interviews one often has the opportunity to ask questions that otherwise are not considered entirely socially appropriate, such as age, date of birth, number of years of schooling. However, the bulk of the information I gathered comes from the more informal conversations I had with a wide variety of inhabitants of Sabang and people from other parts of the municipality, including tourists from all over the world. I also participated in locals' gossiping. Gossip has long attracted the attention of social scientists, and during the course of my field work gossip certainly functioned as an entry point or a "guidepost" (Brennan 2004b: 714) to an insight into this particular way to deal with the social environment (White 2000: 56-86). I did not formally interview tourists as the ones I asked chose not to be interviewed. I talked with numerous tourists, both male and female. Some tourists. Some I talked with at length and others just briefly. Some tourists were first-timers in Sabang while others regularly returned there. Some were explicit about being there for commercial sex while others were not. Many of the tourists I got to know were divers. Unfortunately, I had only few brief interactions with Korean tourists, which I will explain in more detail in Chapter 8, *The New Others*, and I was not able to get in touch with any of the Korean expats residing in Sabang. Their perspectives and experiences are thus out of the scope of this thesis.

The heterogeneity of the population and the various categories of locals in Sabang I felt required that I adapted my interviewing techniques in multiple ways: by combining both formal interviews and informal conversations, but also by switching between languages, modifying my man-

ner of speech and body language, and approaching different social and moral codes.

It is perhaps superfluous to state that interviewing centers on verbal communication. I would like to take the opportunity to make the point that interviewing does not have to exclude other forms of communications – but when carrying out this conventional form of semi-structured interviews the *focus* is on the exchange of words. A classic problem (for the anthropologist) can arise when trying to access information by means of interviews is that not all people with interesting knowledge, experiences, and thoughts are comfortable with verbal narratives. I found several of the issues I was interested in were difficult for some informants to formulate in words, especially more abstract notions of social hierarchies and status, or cultural transformations. In order to reduce the verbal focus in interviews I relied on photo-elicitation (Harper 2002; Schwartz 1989). Photo-elicitation refers to the use of photographs, and it is an established method for gathering information in anthropology. Margaret Mead is generally considered the one who introduced photo-elicitation as a method in ethnographic fieldwork in the 1920s (El Guindi 1998: 475).



Painting displayed outside the Barangay Hall. The ideal future of Sabang for some, but not one very popular among tourists.

By photo-elicitation I refer to the use of photographs in order to provoke a response of the informant. I chose to work with photographs of a variety of situations and motives present in the contemporary and past daily life in Sabang, such as pictures of Sabang before the development of tourism to the area. I asked the informants to describe and discuss what they saw in them, their memories and images of the past, present, and future. In this way, abstract notions of transformations could become

more concrete. I could methodologically and concretely talk about more abstract notions, such as culture and changes or social status and transformations, and through the usage of photos I could elicit these types of discussions. For example, by using a photo of Sabang before tourism and a photo of a mural depicting a vision of a future highly urbanized Sabang, I could invite informants to elaborate on how they thought of these images, how their lives had changed, their experiences, and their opinions on what may have brought on these changes and how they felt about them.

As my research interests involved local perceptions of social hierarchies, I also used what I call 'Status Cards.'¹³ These were cards on which I had written roughly ten different categories of people involved in Sabang tourism, for example 'Waitress, 'GRO' (acronym for Guest Relations Officer, a euphemism for sex worker), 'Western tourist,' and so forth. The informants were asked to place the cards according which they thought were of high status and low status, and then to explain and discuss their choice of order for the cards. I did not intend to use the status cards as a form of a questionnaire, as it was a discussion about social hierarchies I wanted to focus on. This technique proved to be an effective, concrete tool when aiming to generate a discussion about the often abstract issue of social hierarchies. These sorts of statements of social hierarchies were followed up by participant observations and conversations, which were facilitated by the previous use of Status Cards, as I then had a common ground for continuing to ask about the abstract and perhaps not always perceived as socially correct theme of differences of social status. The photos and Status Cards also offered me a way of continuing the discussions outside the formal interviewing context, as my informant and I could refer back to them. The use of techniques such as photoelicitation and Status Cards was my attempt to overcome the sometimes locked positions of researcher and informant, of the researcher and the researched, and to create a more mutually engaged interaction.

¹³ This technique was suggested to me by my supervisor Rosanne Rutten, Department of Anthropology, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Outline of Chapters

The next chapter, *Becoming a Tourism Town*, explores processes of transformations in local social life, economy, and politics. These transformations have led to tourism being embedded in most aspects of everyday life in Sabang. They have also resulted in a displacement of peoples' previous homes and lives. My informants see the changes as having brought new possibilities, business opportunities, modernity, and development. But they also say that the changes have resulted in a loss of social coherence and traditional values, and led to environmental degradation. My informants do not assume a singular position regarding tourism development. They express both hesitations about and gratitude for the transformations of their lives it has entailed.

Tourism to Sabang inevitably involves cross-cultural encounters, and, as I have noted, Sabang is primarily visited by tourists from Australia, Europe, and the United States, and lately also to a lesser degree from Asia, predominantly South Korea. Chapter 3, *Local Representations of Cultures*, addresses the issues of constructions of the Western and Filipino Other, in particular how these are connected to the local tourism industry. I examine how cultural boundaries are manifested, interpreted, and negotiated as well as why they are maintained. Issues of acculturation and commercialization of foremost Filipino socio-cultural life were identified by both Filipino and foreign informants as a source of concern.

Chapter 4, *Bar Girls and Bar Work* shows how the organization of commercial sex offers both the local authorities as well as the bar girls (the most common term locally used for sex workers) a way of downplaying the commercial aspect of sex. The chapter also focuses on the bar girls' strategies to avoid the stigma they face through their work, how the bar girls resist being reduced to stigmatized 'prostitutes,' by attempting to refigure restrictive and essentialist assumptions of themselves and their customers.

Chapter 5, *Living in a Sex Tourism Town*, also treats strategies for dealing with stigma attached to commercial sex, but here at the level of the level of the community. Tourism, in particular sex tourism, has entailed a threat to local Filipinos' sense of moral integrity, and people try to mitigate these consequences. While being financially dependent on the lucrative sex-

cape, locals employ a variety of strategies to distance themselves from it. I examine this ambivalence and suggest that Sabang is constructed in ways that allow notions of morality and immorality to simultaneously coexist, primarily by means of separation between behaviors and spaces into what is identified as appropriate and inappropriate.

Concerns are voiced by local Filipinos that they are losing control over land ownership and their entitlement to Sabang. In chapter 6, *Conflicting Claims to Ownership and Resources* these concerns are presented and discussed. With tourism development, Sabang has gained a newfound position of influence in municipal politics, which illustrates how tourism has become a powerful tool in *barangay* and municipal politics. This chapter focuses on local strategies to control development and develop tourism management and related shifts in local power relations. A new social and political order is emerging as a result of new actors drawing upon the resources that tourism provides.

Chapter 7, *Transnational Relationships*, discusses marriages between Western men and Philippine women and explores how tourism is present also on a personal and intimate level. Tourism has opened possibilities for Filipinos and foreigners to meet and fall in love. While most studies of transnational relationships tend to focus on female marriage migration, this chapter asks: What happens when the transnational couples opt to settle in the home environment of the Filipina wife? In these marriages, my informants create common meeting grounds, overcoming their different positions in regard to various aspects of family life and notions of cultural differences.

Chapter 8, *The New Others*, examines the emergence of a new market of local tourism that developed with the influx of South Korean tourists and expats. They have to a large extent been met by apprehension by the already established populations. Koreans are often identified as inherently different in language, behavior, in style of enterprising, and how they act as tourists. I highlight these issues through the locals' perspectives of Korean tourists' and expats' tourism production and consumption. Notions of a New Other is emerging, one that singles out the Koreans as different. In this process ideas of sameness between Filipinos and Westerners become emphasized.

In the final chapter, *Concluding Remarks: Everyday Life in Sabang* the ma-

major lines of thoughts of the thesis are pulled together. I return to the issue of living an everyday life in a tourist town such as Sabang, a place so starkly defined by international tourism and encounters between people from all over the world, and I identify what can be discerned as significant in the processes of change that emanate from an ethnographic enquiry. The chapter highlights the ambivalences and ambiguities that tourism has entailed.

2. Becoming a Tourism Town

Introduction

The island of Mindoro has long been surrounded by myths and images of isolation (Shultz 1991: 12; Steere 1891: 1041; Wiss 2005: 8). Though it is the seventh largest of the Philippines' 7 107 islands, Mindoro's sizeable land area has not rendered it a position of significance in regards to the national economy, nor can Mindoro boast of being the cradle of high-profile politicians in Manila. Mindoro does not have any major cities or industries and can generally be described as a rural and agricultural island – perhaps with the exception of the provincial capital Calapan and the bustling tourism scene in the northeastern municipality of Puerto Galera, and in particular in *barangay* Sabang.

From the early 1980s and onwards Sabang has grown into an international tourist town, and this chapter explores this development. The question posed by the sociologist Marie-Francoise Lanfant (1995: 8) is reiterated: “How does a society become a tourist society?” Here I more specifically ask: What is the context of the processes that have been instrumental in the transformation of Sabang from a marginalized fishing village into a transnational tourism town? How have these affected the lives of the people living in and visiting Sabang? What kinds of transformations do people in Sabang identify as significant? I will give local tourism development and its transformations some attention, arguing that the understanding of contemporary mode of tourism to Sabang needs to be set in an ethno-historical context, since “one needs to be conscious of the larger historical processes that have shaped the very performance, culture or attribute in scrutiny” (Duval 2004: 58). Tourism is deeply embedded in the lives of the people in Sabang. It is never a single motor for transformation, but here the focus is on local socio-cultural transformations that are

related specifically to tourism development. The process of tourism development was not a straightforward one, but rather one that took several turns along the way, adjusting and readjusting to both demand (tourism consumption) and supply (tourism production). Tourism has gradually led to profound changes that have been both appreciated and met with some hesitation by the local populations.

The *Nipa* Hut

One day in early 2004 people who knew of my interest in Sabang's tourism development came up to me to tell me that the last of the old *nipa* huts (a small bamboo house with a roof made of *nipa* leaves) – the last hut to be a private accommodation from the time before tourism – was being torn down to give way to a two-story concrete building for commercial use. Some years later I was still being told about this particular event: it had remained significant in people's memories. I felt that the dismantling of the last of the old habitats as well as the passing of one of the *barangay*'s oldest inhabitants told of a symbolic transition from the old to the new, from poverty to relative wealth, from the 'backward' to the 'modern.' It illustrated to me how the Sabang 'then' had been replaced by a modern, developed 'urbanized' tourist town, or perhaps even a vision of such a town. The *nipa* hut in question had already long been encased by concrete constructions, and to me, who had passed it daily on my way to my apartment, it had seemed like an annex to one of the neighboring houses. I hadn't realized that the elderly woman I so often had greeted while she was cooking on a gas stove outside the hut was living in the last of the original living houses on the beach front. Throughout the development process, that woman had refused to move from her house, where she had been living since long before the tourists came. She was later remembered a person who stood against the currents of time, refusing to give way to the increasing influence of the tourism industry.

Today only people who can't afford modern houses made of concrete live in *nipa* huts, and in Sabang no one longer lives permanently in *nipa* huts. However, as the older generation of informants grew up in *nipa* huts, these houses also connote a simpler life in the past. The *nipa* huts are

jokingly said to have been ‘naturally air-conditioned,’ needing no electricity, and thus the huts have also become symbols of a life in which one managed without all the modern necessities, with the increased pressures of acquiring material things. The tearing down of the last *nipa* hut may perhaps symbolize how their lives and *barangay* have become transformed into a consumable place, or at least a place where tourist consumption takes precedence over many aspects of living: it is, after all, most locals’ primary livelihood.

Tourism is central in the delineation between ‘then’ and ‘now’ and offers people a point of contrast. My intention has not been to attempt to validate or disqualify people’s narratives of the past. I’m not concerned, as is for example tourism scholar Juline R. Dulnuan (2005), about the lack of a “baseline study,” with the distillation of which changes tourism has brought about and which can be attributed to other forces. There is no need to identify which particular developments can be attributed to tourism and which cannot. Rather, my point is to illustrate the presence of a collectively remembered and constructed ‘then,’ and how tourism acts as a filter through which changes are identified. Locals’ imaginaries of tourism development illuminate how they make their experiences of fundamental changes intelligible. It is how people now see their past that I find interesting, as it signals how people view the present. What may seem as a simplification of life before tourism, including a somewhat romanticized view of a simpler life, also speaks of something complex, that people are trying to make sense of developments, rather than necessarily considering these developments positive or negative.

People’s lives are increasingly drawn into the circuits of international tourism industry, and experiences of change and dislocation are filtered through their understandings of tourism, and tourism and tourists are now understood as the main agents of socio-economic change. Ness (2005: 120) notes that “[t]he experience of displacement is not necessarily traumatic or even negative in any respect.” However, in Sabang some features are commonly identified as loss, foremost by locals and long-time expats, in particular in regards to the issue of loss of social cohesion and negative effects on the physical environment.

Mindoro

The island of Mindoro measures roughly 10 000 square kilometers and is located in the center of the archipelago. The topography is typically mountainous, and agricultural cultivation is possible only in the valleys and coastal lowlands. The island is divided into two provinces: Occidental and Oriental Mindoro, which divide the island in roughly equal-sized halves. The administrative capital of Oriental Mindoro is Calapan city, which functions both as the regional as well as provincial capital. The language mainly spoken is Tagalog. As elsewhere in the country knowledge of English is widespread, as it is, alongside Tagalog, an official language in the Philippines. Various languages and dialects of the ethnic minorities are also spoken, and domestic migrants have brought their respective languages to the area. Of the province's approximately 786 000 inhabitants only 10 % are classified as living in urban areas, while the vast majority do so in rural areas (PSA 2016). Rice, corn, fruits and vegetables are main crops cultivated in the province (NSO 2014). Tourism to the Puerto Galera region is widely considered important for the whole province, as it generates work opportunities for people from poorer areas of the island. Everyday maintenance, such as housecleaning or gardening, or construction work is undertaken by domestic migrants. Occasionally people from the ethnic minority Mangyan are employed, mainly in construction, and they are commonly paid less than members of the majority population, Tagalogs, as they are identified as uneducated, even less so than Tagalog 'unskilled workers'.¹ In 2011 workers labeled 'skilled' earned 400 – 550 pesos (USD 8–11) a day, while 'unskilled workers' earned 300 – 400 pesos (USD 6–8) a day. Mangyans, however, often earned 50 pesos (USD 1) less than their Tagalog counterparts, a practice not officially sanctioned by the municipal government, but nevertheless in place.

Mindoro first appears in written records in AD 982 in Chinese accounts of overseas trade as Ma-i (Scott 1984:65).² However, the Philip-

1 As the majority of Mindoro's population is Tagalog-speaking, I will use the term 'Tagalogs', rather than, for example, 'lowlanders'. I have moreover chosen to adopt the Tagalog broad, etc. and collectivizing identification 'Mangyan,' implicitly referring to Iraya Mangyans residing in the municipality of Puerto Galera. The more emic identification 'Iraya Mangyan' or any of the other categories of Mangyans will be specified when pertinent.

2 Alternatively spelled Mait or Ma-yit.

pine islands are generally claimed to have been ‘discovered’ by Ferdinand Magellan in 1521 when on an exploration expedition for a western passage to the Molucca (Spice) islands.³ Mindoro enters Spanish colonial records when Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, the first Spanish Governor of the Philippines, also known as ‘the conqueror of the Philippines,’ in 1570 had ordered two of his men en route from Cebu to land on Mindoro (Postma 1977: 254).

The bay of Puerto Galera subsequently became central in the Spanish galleon trade between Manila and Acapulco, Mexico, as it offered a natural shelter for typhoons and could function as a repair and refilling station throughout the year. The Spaniards founded Puerto Galera in 1574, the town was the capital of Mindoro until 1837, when the capital was moved to Calapan. Puerto Galera remains an important gateway to the island.⁴ Soon after the arrival of the Spaniards, attempts to Christianize the population of the Philippines were initialized. The first Augustinian priests arrived in Mindoro in 1572 (Schult 1991: 26f), and they were later replaced by members of the Franciscan order. It was mainly the Tagalogs who converted to Catholicism, while the Mangyan populations remained elusive to attempts of conversion (Postma 1977). The generic term Mangyan refers today to eight different “Indigenous Peoples” in Mindoro, as they are labeled by the Philippine government. The Iraya Mangyan communities are concentrated in the Puerto Galera region. The Mangyans are identified by the Tagalog population as well as NGOs and government agencies as differing from today’s majority population in a number of ways: by language, culture, physical features, religious beliefs, and self-identification.⁵

3 It should be noted that the common understanding of the Philippines as untouched by outside or European contacts before the arrival of Magellan has been questioned. The historian William Henry Scott (1989) has pointed out a pre-colonial “Mediterranean connection,” through the expansion of Muslim rule in Southeast Asia; this included what would later become the Philippines, and Islamic missionaries, who may well have originated from Moro parts of Spain, as well as previous European exploration expeditions, and contacts through extensive Asian inter-island trade, including societies already colonized by Europeans.

4 The origin of the name Mindoro is popularly said to be derived from the Spanish *Mina de Oro*, mine of gold, reflecting the Spaniards’ wish of finding El Dorado. However, the origin of ‘Mindoro’ is contested, and many historians today argue that the name rather refers to Minolo, a main pre-colonial settlement on the island, located in Puerto Galera region (Juan 2005; Postma 1977: 353f; Schult 1991: 24, n.7).

5 To explain physical, linguistic, and cultural differences in pre-colonial as well in contem-

In Mindoro, as elsewhere in the Philippines and Southeast Asia a distinction is made between the ‘civilized’ lowland Tagalogs and the ‘primitive’ but ‘indigenous’ highland, mountain-dwelling Mangyans.

Throughout the years of Spanish (1521–1898) and U.S. (1898–1946) colonization and well into the years of Philippine independence, Mindoro’s development was characterized by what historian Wolker Schult (1991) calls a “delayed development.” There was for a long time a wish of the various governments to attract ‘desirable’ immigrants, a designation that built on, and entrenched, a Tagalog-Mangyan divide, where the former were seen as more commercially valuable for the colonial economy. However, there were also continuing problems of constructing a viable infrastructure to transport people and produce, which made extracting resources from the island difficult. Throughout Mindoro’s history, wars and militarized conflicts have also prompted Tagalogs to move to other islands, and Mangyans to retreat to more inaccessible areas of the island, as well as ruined the infrastructure that had been constructed (Helbling & Schult 1997; Schult 1991, 1997). In the years under President Ferdinand Marcos (1965–1986) several ambitious projects to modernize Mindoro were initiated. However, due to lack of funding, corruption, and insufficient planning, these projects were slow to materialize or proved not to be sustainable (Schult 1991: 124-128).

Hence, although Puerto Galera and Sabang in particular have become part of a globally connected tourism sector, this development builds on a history of marginalization, or as Wiss (2005: 8) puts it: “Sabang [...] came into existence through a complex heritage of historical events that

porary Philippines, several scientists in the late 19th and early 20th century developed ideas of waves of migration, among which the *Beyer Wave Migration Theory* is the best known. The theory was developed by the anthropologist H. Otley Beyer, “known to every literate Filipino today” (Scott 1994: 10) and postulates a series of waves of immigration to the Philippine islands. With each wave the earlier and more so-called ‘primitive’ populations were assumed to be pushed to less favorable, mountainous regions, while the later and more ‘technically advanced’ immigrants occupied the attractive and cultivable lowlands, creating a division between the primitive highlanders and advanced lowlanders. This racial-cultural scheme has been heavily criticized, and little linguistic, archeological, or geological evidence has been presented to support it (Scott 1994: 11). Today, historians agree that the Philippines was populated by a multitude of ‘races’ and ethno-linguistic groups such as Mangyan, Chinese, Moro, or Malay origin – or a mixture thereof – at the time of the arrival of the Spanish colonizers (Aguilar 2005; Lynch 2004 [1967]; Scott 1994: 12).

continue to produce its image of isolation.” However, Sabang was not to be isolated much longer.

The municipality of Puerto Galera is divided into 13 *barangays* (the smallest part of Philippine administrative system), of which the central *barangay* Poblacion, and two adjacent *barangays* are officially classified as urban, while the others are labeled as rural (PPDO 2005: 7). The municipality is essentially a coastal community, as all but one of the *barangays* are coastal. In official records, in 2010, the whole municipality of Puerto Galera had a population of 32 521 (Puerto Galera Online Services 2016). A vast majority of the population is Tagalog-speaking, but Iraya Mangyan and more recent immigrants predominantly from poorer areas of Visayas, Mindanao, and Bicol are also present in the municipality. The majority are Roman Catholics, and a minority Protestants, Muslim, or, as identified by the authorities, Animists. The latter designation probably refers to non-Christian Mangyans.

There are a few extended families in Poblacion, the central part of Puerto Galera, that are generally hailed to be the ‘native inhabitants’ of the municipality of Puerto Galera, tracing their ancestry back to Spanish colonial time and thus not to Mangyan or other pre-colonial identities. They have their Spanish last names to prove their historical claims to the area. These families constitute the municipal affluent elite, continuing the structure of colonial organization of forming a local elite, and have managed to develop prominent businesses, gain wealth, and reach high-ranking positions not only in municipal politics, but in other areas as well, such as in church organizations, heading various committees, occupying high-profile positions such as Municipal Chief of Medicine or Chief of Police. At the Municipal hall, there are paintings and photographs of the 16 Municipal Mayors from 1904 to the present on display. A quick glance at their names reveals a municipality that has long been ruled by a limited number of families.

The municipality of Puerto Galera is a comparatively thriving one due to its ever-growing tourism industry. One survey of local demography defined 6 of the total of 13 *barangays* as tourism *barangays*, while the remaining ones are thus non-tourism *barangays* (Cola & Hapitan 2004: 5). Some livelihoods are less apparently linked to the tourism sector, while others are more directly involved. Common occupations throughout the municipal-

ity are farming, fishing, transportation, mainly *jeepney*, *banca*, and *tricycle*, administration and clerical jobs, and running businesses such as resorts, restaurants, souvenir shops, grocery and *sari-sari* stores (small convenience stores), eateries, or mechanical shops.

A Prosperous *Barangay*

The name Sabang is in local legend said to derive from *sabog*, to scatter, and in local tongue *sabangan/sabugan* refers to being a wedding sponsor or handing out wedding gifts.⁶ The tale of Sabang tells of an out-of-town merchant's son who married a woman from a small fishing village by the sea. At the wedding the groom's father was amazed at the practice of giving gifts to the couple, and the bride's father explained about their custom of giving gifts to support the newlyweds in their life ahead. The inhabitants then named their village Sabang (Barangay Profile 2006).

When attempting to define what Sabang signifies to different people, one encounters a wide array of meanings. Locals acquainted with the story associated it with a long tradition of generosity, confirming a self-identification of caring and sharing. People from other *barangays* in the municipality tended to regard this tale as a proof of wealth, that the people of Sabang have been more fortunate than others and thus had the opportunity to be generous to the degree that even the name of their *barangay* signals prosperity. In a sense, it is possible to speak of a collective upward movement in the social standing in regard to the native inhabitants of Sabang. Sabang is visibly better off than other *barangays* in Puerto Galera in that the majority of them live in concrete houses and can afford electricity, private cars, computers, mobile phones, and internet access in their homes. They can send their children to school, afford to seek medical care when needed, and buy new *bancas* or *jeepneys*. The children's school uniforms are new, and after high school the young people are able to go to college; many of the locals can afford fancy weddings and hire help to care for their elderly.

⁶ *Sabang* is translated as an "advance patrol to reconnoiter or detect an enemy's position," and *sabáng* as "intersection or crossing of streets, railroads etc." in a Tagalog-English dictionary (English 1986: 1115). However, in local legend these interpretations are not recognized.

It is difficult to find quantitative confirmation of the relative prosperity of Sabang and Puerto Galera. An employee at the provincial office of Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) in the provincial capital Calapan expressed suspicions of the low rate of the official tax declaration of Puerto Galera. Alongside the provincial capital, Puerto Galera is perceived to be the richest municipality in the province, reinforcing the image of both the foreign and the urban areas as wealthy, while rural areas are associated with poverty and underdevelopment. One survey I found did indeed show that the mean income is significantly higher in tourism *barangays*: in 2004 the average income per month was 16 053 pesos (USD 321), while in non-tourism ones it was 12 464 pesos per month (USD 249) (Cola & Hapitan 2004: 13).⁷

It is not only through their new economy the people of Sabang are considered fortunate in the eyes of the general population of the municipality, and the province. The close association between foreigners and Sabang also contributes to the perception of Sabang as wealthy. In a sense this is a result of the visible presence of foreigners, and there is a ‘rub-off effect’ – if the foreign is identified as wealthy, so are the people associated with the foreign. The success stories of Sabang and White Beach (another tourist site in the municipality, mostly visited by domestic tourists) are not uncontroversial. Jun is a local man in his 50s, who holds multiple positions in the local community, he is involved in *barangay* politics, runs a small grocery store, and is employed by a Korean expat as a general manager in of the go-go bars. Jun is a talkative man with a broad smile. As Jun phrased the shift in social status: “These people in town (Poblacion), they were the rich people in the 1970s. They were dealing with people from the other *barangays* like they were the kings of Puerto Galera. That was during the time that Puerto Galera didn’t have any tourists yet. Sabang people were fisher folks and White Beach, I don’t know what they were doing, they were just quarrying sand and sending it to Manila for aquariums.” Jun continues to explain what happened next: “And then the tourists came [to Sabang] and now the rich people come from Sabang and White Beach. So, these people in town, they are jealous.”

7 In Puerto Galera, then, the situation is not comparable to that of Boracay, from where Smith (2001: 148) reports that tourism “offered virtually nothing to the local Boracaynons. For they lacked capital with which to build competing hotels.” In Sabang most locals have been able to access the tourism industry, although not on equal terms and with varying results.

What Jun refers to is the fact that, as a whole, Sabang has become a comparatively well-off *barangay*. However, in a national perspective, not to mention in international comparison, Sabang is still considered ‘provincial’ by most locals as opposed to the urban Manila, and even though some families have been able tap into the lucrative tourism industry, the fortunes of these families can’t be compared to the affluent elites of the major cities, like Manila. Associating oneself with the upper class or perhaps, or even the middle-class of Manila is not a viable option, not even for the more well-off inhabitants of Sabang (see Pinches 1999). They may be locally wealthy and influential, but rarely does this result in influence outside the *barangay* or the municipality. Sabang and its inhabitants continue to be of marginal financial and political influence, although their social status within the municipality is elevated.



Successful local Filipinos live in fancy houses and drive new cars.

Domestic migrants can only afford to live in less desirable areas. Here in the swamp behind Big Lalaguna.



Memories of the Past

The older generations of locals in Sabang have experienced tremendous transformations in their lives. The elderly population told me that they suffered from poverty and need in their younger days. This is a situation that, for many, changed with the advent of tourism.

Amihan was born in Sabang in 1949 and has lived there all her life. Her late husband also came from Sabang, and they were related to most of the other locals. She laughed when she explained: “we are all one family here,” referring to the interrelatedness among the locals. Together they had one daughter and two sons. When the children were still young, she took care of the children and weaved *buri* mats, made from the leaves of the *buri* palm, while her husband worked as a sailor. When tourists began to arrive, she first worked as a laundry woman, but when they saw the business opportunities in tourism, Amihan and her family started building cottages. The favorable location of her extended family’s land lots also enabled them to later lease them to foreigners, and now they continue to live on the generous deal they were offered. She feels she owes her comforts to tourism and that Sabang as a whole has gained from it: “It’s good because we are earning a lot of money to support our family. If the tourists would not be coming here and go somewhere else, it would be bad for the economy. The tourists are the ones we depend on for our income.” Amihan says she is content with her life; she now has financial security, and she proudly showed me her insurance papers, which means that she doesn’t have to worry as much about needing medical care if something should happen to her. Amihan’s three children all went to college – although her youngest son was too “lazy,” as she says, to finish his education. ‘Laziness’ is identified by elders as a general ‘problem of the youth’ in today’s Sabang. Her oldest son works as a sailor, sailing around the world and her daughter married a Swede and moved to Sweden. With her husband diseased, Amihan now only has her youngest son with her in Sabang. Although she’s happy for her other children, she also feels the loss of not having two of them nearby. But today’s technology makes things easier; Amihan talks regularly with her daughter and grandson via Skype. She has also been able to visit her daughter and her family in Sweden, and they also come to Sabang every few years. Amihan has experienced living

in Sabang before the development of tourism, a life she remembers being filled with hardships. Today her life is intrinsically linked to tourism, as she continues to be dependent on the incomes it generates, and her family has become a transnational one, and Amihan's life plays out simultaneously in different parts of the world.

Amihan's story illustrates how many of the locals have experienced the harsh conditions of life in a poor coastal community, how tourism offered new possibilities of making a living, how they may live in comparative comfort today, and how their lives are entangled in the networks of globalization, seeing not only tourists arriving *in* Sabang, but also how locals migrate *from* Sabang, often through marriage or labor migration, such as in the case of two of Amihan's children. Sabang is now a transnational town where the population engages in global connections in their daily lives.

Life before tourism is remembered as difficult, involving hard work, fishing and subsistence farming, and little monetary income. Locals remember Sabang as populated by only a few extended families, and tell stories of how there were no roads or motorized vehicles, and traveling was undertaken solely by *bancas* driven by wind or by paddling. The narratives of the locals tell of living in *nipa* huts, where they also gave birth to their children and died, of a time when modern medicine was a luxury they could not afford, and how they too often had to bury their children prematurely. Their memories also tell of having little or no experience of going to school, and of suffering from poverty and hunger. The oldest generation also remembered WW II, of taking shelter when the risk of air strikes was imminent, and how Japanese soldiers came to Sabang in search of amenities.

Filipino locals' memories of the past are nonetheless often framed in terms of nostalgia, and they often present a romantic image of the past. The stories people tell illuminate them contrasting what they experience as Sabang of the past and Sabang of the present. These memories also contain elements of lament that life has become commercialized and increasingly reliant on modern comforts. In their memories of the Sabang 'then' people had knowledge of how to make use of materials available to them in their immediate vicinity, and of how to use herbs and plants for medicine. This knowledge and these skills are lost today. Although the relative

monetary affluence of today is appreciated, some aspects of life are also lost, such as the possibilities of cultivating a fruit and vegetable garden, which is not viable today due to land shortage. Lilibeth, a woman in her 60s, remembers her childhood in a typical romantic shimmer, and says: “You know, we were not rich but we could afford just about everything. We had plenty of mango trees, orange trees and the other seasonal fruits and vegetables. When mango and coconut or *mais* (corn) or *kamote* (sweet potato) were in season, people were coming to us and trying to harvest it too.” Lilibeth continues: “I had a nice life here, that oohh... even though we were very poor of money, we were very rich in happiness.”

Sabang before tourism is also remembered as a place where social order and good Catholic beliefs and moral values and customs were upheld; it was a community where everybody knew each other. Gender roles are often described by informants as having been neatly complementary, in accordance with ideal models of gender allocation. Women’s primary role is described as that of a mother, taking care of the household chores, child-rearing and the vegetable garden. The men are described as having taken their role as the heads of the families seriously, and they often worked outside the family house, either as local fishermen, with copra production, or as sailors. The latter occupation often took the men away from the local community as the ships traveled between Manila and the island of Palawan. Lilibeth’s quote above signals how boundaries between ‘now’ and ‘then’ are actively constructed of a sense of displacement and loss of social cohesion and public morality.

The life before tourism is associated in retrospect with as simpler place, and one of poverty. People do not simply romanticize the past as a paradise lost (a common theme in tourism studies). They also reflect critically over their experiences of poverty and their aspirations to increase their living standards today. Locals’ relationship with the past is a complex one. Moreover, processes of identity making of the present were always present and intertwined in the recollections of Sabang of the past. Or as the anthropologist Yujie Zhu (2012: 1503) more eloquently phrases it: “The past events were woven into a narrative through identity creation and value negotiation.” Or to put in another order: the stories of the memories of the past told about experiences of the present. The narratives of the transformations of their lives and of Sabang can thus be

seen as a local tale of fundamental changes. They are also a discourse of displacements, where one's lives are altered to fit new resources and new demands.

The advent of tourism in Sabang has to some extent followed what the researcher in international development R.W. Carter (2004) describes as “sporadic growth,” where the local tourism sector has changed “in steps, with visitor numbers reflecting episodic physical development of facilities and infrastructure, which increase more rapidly with each step” (Carter 2004: 393). In the case of Sabang, however, I've chosen to use the term ‘phase’ rather than step, in order to put emphasis on the gradual aspect of tourism development. Sabang's inhabitants have noticed great transformations throughout the years. However, the developments are often identified as initially slow but later accelerating, a development experienced by locals as largely uninterrupted and seamless, but one with dramatic outcomes. When attempting to get an overview of tourism development in Sabang, with the intended and unintended displacements, I discerned three phases: The first phase (1980–1990) was that of the introduction of foreign visitors who came to Sabang for the purpose of leisure. In the second phase (1990–2000) the increasing flow of foreign male tourists became progressively more commercialized, and a local sex industry developed. In the third phase (2000 and forward) the number of tourists and tourism establishments and their size grew, and more and more female tourists and Asian tourists visited Sabang, to some degree decreasing the focus on the nightlife.

Phase 1 (1980-1990): It All Started With the *Papaya*

In the early 1980s Western tourists began to find their way to the northern shores of Mindoro. The very first foreign tourists said to have visited to the Puerto Galera region, including Sabang, in the late 1970s are by the older locals affectionately remembered as *Papaya*. They are said to have caused great excitement and have remained in locals' memories as nearly mythical figures. The stories surrounding them are many, and I was amazed at what meanings people inscribed in their recollections of them. *Papaya* is a part of a collective memory to the extent that even individuals

who were not born at the time had internalized images of them and were able to tell me anecdotes about them, how they looked, behaved, where they stayed, what they ate, or why they were in the area. The *Papaya* have come to represent an epitomizing event, a starting point for a new era.

Papaya usually refers to a Western couple who stayed in the area for an extended period of time, and who moved between various locations in the municipality. The most common explanation as to why they were called *Papaya* was that they were always eating papaya. Other popular speculations are that they looked like papaya, that the only word they could communicate was 'Papaya,' that they slept under a Papaya tree, or because the woman's breasts reminded people of the fruit. Several Filipino locals emphasized that meeting the *Papaya* was also their first encounter with a white person and that their light skin, height, and the color of their hair and eyes looked strange and fascinating to them. The significance of the *Papaya* as being the first foreigners seems to stem from the identification of them as the first *tourists* in the contemporary sense. The *Papaya* were reportedly neither missionaries nor involved in any development projects. Locals remember being perplexed by the fact that somebody would travel to Puerto Galera just to spend time at the beach, which was something novel to the locals. White people had already been present in the area, at the time the main church in Puerto Galera, for example, had for quite some time been headed by Father Erwin Thiel, a white German priest who lived in Puerto Galera for almost 20 years and who died there in 1982. The *Papaya* are still identified as the first of many tourists to come, and their arrival marks the beginning of the changes Sabang subsequently underwent. The stories of the *Papaya* signal how the previous 'strangeness' has now become something familiar. What then was 'exotic' is now a part of their everyday lives. What now seems strange or exotic in the eyes of the locals is now rather the amazement over how perplexed they were by the first tourists. The *Papaya* seem also to represent the boundary of before and after the advent of tourism.

Soon after the *Papayas'* visit other tourists came to Sabang. The first backpackers stayed in the homes of the inhabitants. Eventually locals began to charge for room and board and later on started to construct *nipa* huts for the sole purpose of renting them out to visitors, expanding their businesses as much as they could. Some of the first tourists married into

local families, and settled in Sabang. These pioneering expats opened diving shops, small restaurants, and cottages for rent. Sabang began attracting a growing number of tourists, largely through the informal networks of contacts of the expats, according to the ‘old-time expats’ I talked to. The first tourists are today described by locals as well as expats in what is today perceived as ideal terms: they were respectful to the Filipino locals, they did not complain or demand more of Sabang than what it could offer in terms of comfort and amenities, and they did not come there to engage in binge drinking or commercial sex. The first tourists were seen by locals as bit odd, as behaving strangely and sometimes jokingly described as uncivilized, as Benlida, an elderly local woman remembers: “In the beginning we compared the tourists with the Mangyans, like the minority. We described them as Mangyans, because they were different and didn’t speak Tagalog. But we were happy, and joyful, because we thought they came with more blessings.”

The early growth, up to the late 1980s and early 1990s, is described by older Filipino locals as progressing *dahan-dahan* (slowly/carefully). The realization of the potential in tourism came with the pioneering expats who married into local families. The expats had the connections and the knowledge to attract other potential tourists, as well as the financial capability to set up businesses. Many of today’s Philippine tourist towns share this initial development marked by interdependency between expats and locals (Bersales 1999; Dulnuan 2005; Nicholson 1997; Smith 1992, 2001; Trousdale 1999). The anthropologist Valene L. Smith (1992: 156), for example, notes that local population in the now popular tourist destination Boracay were “independently involved” in the emerging business opportunities by quickly grasping the needs of the tourists and providing supply for the demand of activities, souvenirs, food, drinks, and housing. Tourism development in Sabang in this initial stage, as I was told by several informants, was spontaneous and small in scale, characterized by a sense of seizing the opportunity presented by the visiting foreigners, with little support from the local or national government in planning, shaping, or regulating the tourism industry.

The locals’ narratives of the initial tourism development emphasize the small scale, familiarity between the tourists and local inhabitants, and a sense of community between the first expats. People rarely mention any

sense of displacement, of re-modulation of lives in order to accommodate tourism. Tourism seems to have been an extension of their daily life, not something dictating it. Later on people were surprised by the extent of the growth, and were little prepared to deal with what came with this expansion of tourism. While the first foreigners were welcomed as guests in the houses and lives of the local populations, these relations changed with the changes brought about by the growing tourism sector.

Phase 2 (1990-2000): Dive at Daytime, Sex at Nighttime

Barangay Sabang is well known for its scuba diving opportunities and, to an equal extent, for its nightlife. (Anonymous 2002. No pagination)

If the main attraction of Sabang in the first phase was scuba diving and relaxing in a small beach village in the tropics, the attraction of Sabang in the second phase it was that of scuba diving in combination with commercial sex. With the establishment of go-go bars in Sabang in the 1980s, a shift took place in the initially rather slow process, and the growth of the tourism sector intensified. By the mid-1990s Sabang had a pin placed on the international global sex tourism map.

The municipality of Puerto Galera's two main tourist sites, Sabang and White Beach, differ markedly. White Beach, can – as the name suggests – entice tourists with a postcard-like long and wide beach, lined by palm trees. Despite its seemingly advantageous natural environment, White Beach has not become the municipality's main tourist attraction, at least not for foreign tourists. Instead White Beach is primarily visited by domestic tourists, and is mostly busy during Easter and the summer month (April). Other times of the year, White Beach is nearly deserted. Sabang, on the other hand, attracts international tourists, the majority of whom were, and still are, white Western men, from Europe, Australia, and the U.S.

In Sabang it was the underwater world rather than sandy beaches that attracted tourists, with its coral reefs and its plethora of colorful fishes, underwater cages housing sharks, and shipwrecks. Sabang gradually became

internationally known for its scuba diving, an activity mainly undertaken by foreign tourists rather than their domestic counterparts. Since diving is mainly a daytime activity, eventually a market for nighttime activities was spotted. Local Filipinos realized the potential profits in offering the overwhelmingly male tourists what they seemed to wish, an alternative leisure activity, which would take the form of 'entertainment.' Sabang's lack of a nice beach and of activities such as historical or cultural sites to be explored and a need for an income-generating activity are often stated as main reasons why the locals turned to the commercial sex industry. When asked about why tourists came to Sabang, one local woman simply stated that: "I don't know why they kept on coming here. I asked: 'What are they doing here?' there was nothing to look at here, they just went swimming, fishing. That's all because there were no disco bars here before. We were wondering why the tourists kept on coming here. In fact they couldn't find anything here. [...] There's nothing nice to watch here. What places can be visited here? There's only going to the disco, or go diving..." At the time of our interview she still seemed genuinely surprised at the arrival of tourists, but she also hints at an understanding when it came to diving and the go-go bars: the later provided the tourists with something to do when they were not diving.

Jun was personally involved in the sex scene. Among his many various businesses and engagements he also was as a general manager of one of the go-go bars. Jun was unusually outspoken about commercial sex offered these words on how the go-go bars came to into being: "Back then, in the 80's, nobody went to Sabang. Very few tourists were here at that time. The tourists didn't feel that they were at a nice beach because it was a fishing village so they didn't go to Sabang. When the people in Sabang wanted to get into the tourism business, they really had to find a way to compete with the other beaches, and they thought about of how to attract the tourists. They saw that the tourists that came to Puerto Galera already had Filipinas with them; they got them from Olongapo or Ermita. So, they got the idea: 'Aha, prostitution is a good business, so...'" Commercial sex, in Jun's opinion, was something that was actively developed in response to a lack of other touristic things to do, and as a consequence of the foreigners' practice of bringing sex workers with them to Sabang. The

sex workers were not from the beginning, nor later on, local women, but women from other parts of the country.

In this second phase, the go-go bars started to dominate the tourism scene. Diving continued to be a popular daytime activity, but it was the nighttime 'entertainment' that subsequently became a main tourist attraction, and Sabang now attracted tourists whose purpose of traveling there was the bar scene and who had no interest in scuba diving. During this phase Sabang was shaped into what others have called a "liminoid playground" (Selänniemi 2003), "pleasure periphery" (Turner & Ash 1975), and an international "sexscape" (Brennan 2004a): a place increasingly constructed for outsiders' consumption of commercial sex. Sabang was thus transformed from a fishing village into a sex tourism town. With the bar scene, drug use also became more commonplace, in particular among the bar girls, who used *shabu* (a methamphetamine, also called "ice"), to overcome their personal inhibitions when contacting potential customers. Their customers often engaged in heavy drinking, and Sabang became a place of commercial sex and excessive alcohol and drug use. The identification and representation of Sabang in travel guides, and people's memories of it, was now more that of a sex tourist destination, rather than a quaint paradise-like tropical beach village.

With the emerging sex scene, an increasing number of tourists married bar girls and settled down in Sabang. The expat community grew and with them also the tourism industry, as these new inhabitants opened business of their own, such as resorts, bars, restaurants, and diving shops. In this rather extended middle phase, most of the establishments continued to be family-run businesses of medium scale. The local families expanded their enterprises whenever they could afford to do so. Also, in tandem with the expanding tourism sector, the need for a workforce grew, encouraging people from outside of Sabang to seek employment. Members of the local families told me how they themselves back then still managed some of the work running their businesses themselves, but employed others to do some of the manual labor, such as a maid for cleaning and washing, handymen, or *banca* drivers. The new economy of commercial tourism was a labor-intensive one, resulting in an increasing number of domestic migrants living in or working in Sabang. Outsiders, people with no previous ties to local families, became a common and permanent presence in

Sabang. Migrants from other parts of the Philippines generally took on the less attractive positions as sex workers, lowly establishment employees, beach vendors, and masseuses. As a result, Sabang became more populated. Not all migrants could afford to settle down in Sabang, but opted to do so in neighboring *barangays* instead. A new pattern of social stratifications emerged: The land owning local inhabitants and expats were able to profit from tourism, while outsiders took on the less remunerated and low-status work.

Dependency on tourism, as well as an extensive accommodation to the tourism sector, became permanent during this phase. The previous economy of agriculture, fishing, and small-scale production was replaced by one that was dependent on global connections. A physical displacement was also initiated as locals increasingly moved out of their houses to give way to tourism, and, perhaps most importantly, locals relied more and more on the incomes generated by what was deemed the highly immoral aspects of the local tourism scene, namely the commercial sex industry. Sabang was physically adapted to the needs and preferences of the international tourists and developed strategies to morally justify the presence of sex tourism in their midst. Thus, in this phase a process of displacement was manifested not only in living arrangements but also in conceptions of sexual morality. This was done by accepting and allowing and to some extent also encouraging, at least by some locals, the activities relating to commercial sex. Despite the continuing problems of infrastructure, such as poor roads, planning, or governance, and little information for potential tourists to access, the tourism industry continued to expand.

Phase 3 (2000-forward): Intensified Expansion

Sabang's beachfront is jam-packed with hotels, restaurants and dive shops. Rowdier than anywhere else on the island, Sabang still has plenty of quiet patches of paradise if you look hard enough. (Kerr et al. 2000: 266)

From a distance, Sabang looks innocuous enough, even attractive. Up close, one of the Philippines' preeminent diving destinations,

located on the island of Mindoro, proves to be somewhat seedier. Those who come to explore the underwater wonders discover an overdeveloped cluster of geriatric watering holes full of delusional men with decorative money-hungry twenty-somethings on their arms. Do these guys really scuba dive? Anyway, underwater the scenery is worth the sleazy company. (Contemporary Nomad 2014)

People with long-term experience of Sabang often talk about a veritable ‘explosion’ of the tourism scene in the 2000s, in particular in the middle of the decade. This sense is also reflected in the records of the local branch of the Department of Tourism. In the 1980s and 1990s fewer than 10 000 tourists were noted to annually arrive to the whole municipality of Puerto Galera; for example, the recorded number of foreign tourists was 8735 in 1995 (Rodolfo 2009: 244). By 2009, the total number of foreign and domestic tourists to the whole municipality had risen to 150 000 (PGIC 2010: 5). However, keeping track of the arriving tourists has been proven to be difficult task, undertaken irregularly throughout the years, and the numbers should be regarded as indicative of a significant increase of tourist arrivals, rather than statistically reliable data. Furthermore, only foreign tourists were recorded as tourists in the mid-1990s, while domestic tourists are included in the later figures.

In Sabang, the smaller family-run resorts have increasingly been replaced by several large and more high-end resorts, the largest having 55 rooms. The tourists have the option of staying in these, in a local perspective, large establishments, which offer private rooms with air-conditioning, cable TV, internet access, showers with hot and cold water, and they also often have their own swimming pool, diving shop, and restaurant. The resorts have their own diesel-driven generators, which guarantee electricity even during the frequent power outages. The prices of rooms in these resorts run from 1 500 pesos (USD 30) for a standard room to 8 000 pesos (USD 160), for the most luxurious ones. The competition for tourists keeps the prices fairly even between the larger resorts and the smaller accommodations.

The tourists’ demands for comfort have become higher, and a common complaint among the local Filipino is that: “Before they stayed with

families, now they want everything.” The businesses need to provide the amenities the tourists are demanding, otherwise they risk losing customers. Today the world is at your fingertips in Sabang; many resorts offer free Wi-Fi to their customers, the travel agencies can assist tourists in booking flights, and banking is made easy by a local bank, which also has an ATM. The cable TV offers entertainment from several countries and languages, and popular sport events such as soccer or cricket matches are shown live at pubs via satellite. At times, European and American newspapers find their way to Sabang, though the Internet is the primary way used to keep up with the latest events at home. Also gastronomically one can easily access imported food, such as Australian steaks, German sausages, American mustard, Korean kimchi, French cheese, Japanese noodles, and so forth. Diving shops also offer dives and courses in several languages. Sabang is now truly a transnational arena where the main identity is that of a commercialized tourist space.

The beaches are the workplace for quite a number of people. There are permanent vending stalls for trinkets and souvenirs as well as ambulatory beach vendors, offering tourists everything from necklaces, live crabs, sharks’ teeth, fish, snacks, large paintings, sunglasses, shoes, t-shirts, counterfeit DVDs, Viagra (also counterfeit), and fresh fruits. There are also boatmen offering passersby ‘special trips’ for those tourists who want to travel privately by *banca*. Beach masseuses commonly gather in groups in areas where they can find some shade in wait for a customer. The beach is thus an important area for the many that rely on tourists for their livelihood. This contrasts with tourists’ expectations of the beach as a place to relax; Wiss (2005: 20) points out that the beach is: “Rather than an empty, Utopian space readily inscribed as paradise, Sabang’s beach is a vital part of the community. It is still considered a collective domain – a place of public access and livelihood.” Being approached by vendors or surrounded by heavy *banca* traffic sometimes deflates tourists’ wishes for the beach as a place of private relaxation.

As the quote in the beginning of the section reveals, Sabang is still identified in the daytime by many locals as well as tourists as a place for scuba diving, while the nighttime is dedicated to commercial sex. A widespread sexualization and erotization of Philippine women is obvious from almost any webpage in the Philippines, which becomes particularly pro-

nounced if one undertakes a web search for a known sex tourism site such as Sabang. On most webpages relating to Sabang, the front figure is often a young Filipina, often dressed in a bikini, and the norm is to find ads attached to the webpage linked to contact sites, where foreign men and Filipinas can get in touch with each other.

Lately the image of Sabang as a sex haven has started to change. Nowadays packaged diving tours are available, and several resorts actively offers 'family holidays' with childcare while parents are out diving and activities for children. Still, female tourists often complained to me about the general prominence of the go-go bars, and the lack of alternative activities, and several female backpackers I met cut their stays short. They often described how uncomfortable they were with the go-go bars and how they felt that all men were there for the commercial sex, and identified them as 'dirty old men,' with whom they had little in common. Female tourists often expressed how out of place they felt. Sara, a Swedish woman and one of the few female diving instructors I encountered throughout my stays in Sabang, grew frustrated with her co-workers and students and exclaimed: "It's so boring, all they talk about is 'My Filipina girlfriend is like this or that.' It's like they can't talk about anything else." The relationships formed between Filipinas and foreigners constitute central parts in the interactions between Filipinos and foreigners, but one that female tourists and expats do not partake in. This sometimes leads to a sense of exclusion, which Sara reports.

The previous dominance of male tourism has nonetheless begun to decrease, mainly since the late 2000s. And in the span of a few years, there has been a dramatic increase in Korean tourists and Korean expats in Sabang. The Philippines has become a popular tourist destination among Koreans, and in Sabang the increase became noticeable when Korean expats started settling in Sabang and opening tourism-related businesses offering service in Korean. The Korean expats have engaged in the various businesses diving shops, restaurants, and souvenir shops, as well as go-go bars. Many of the Korean businesses, with the exception of go-go bars, tend to cater almost exclusively to Korean tourists. However, there is a distance between the Western and the Korean tourists, and they have little or no interaction with each other. The Korean tourists and expats represent a change in the local production and consumption of tourism, but

boundaries between them and the established Western tourists and expats are maintained.

Through the lens of tourism, Filipinos and old-time Westerners in Sabang conceptualize, negotiate, and even resist a nowadays widespread sense of being overwhelmed by 'development' and 'tourism,' and how people are negotiating Sabang as a place of a memory, the present, and the future. To be more specific, in these recollections and imaginings in Sabang, tourism is of central importance. Tourism is often seen as the motor of the transformations and locally often also seen as the only path to the future. People in Sabang continuously deal with the changes they experience, formulating strategies to maintain their identities and senses of community, all within a setting of an ever-expanding tourism sector.

Uncontrolled Development

Sabang's tourism sector has largely grown without support from the national or local government. No comprehensive local master plan has been compiled, and there are no general guidelines for tourism development or a system of evaluating, monitoring, or long-term planning. The national and local governments have failed to grasp the potential of tourism for Puerto Galera and Sabang. Mindoro and Puerto Galera are mentioned in Department of Tourism documents as places identified as *prospective* sites for tourism development. No attention is given to the already existing sites (DOT 1997). Meanwhile, the locations identified as interesting for tourism exploitation in Mindoro by the national Department of Tourism have not developed into major tourist sites, whereas the areas of White Beach and Sabang have continued to attract increasing numbers of tourists.⁸

⁸ Local promotional campaigns undertaken by the local branch of the national Department of Tourism have often been directed at domestic tourists, such as having a stand at the yearly Department of Tourism exhibition in Manila, inviting journalists for a luxury week-long stay at the finest resorts in the Puerto Galera area in the hopes of publishing good reviews in national media, or supporting a regatta. Unfortunately, some of the major local tourism projects have failed miserably, such as the construction of the Plaza Iluminada and the Kaaldawan Festival. However, these two major tourist projects weren't able to attract either domestic or foreign tourists, and they were persistently rumored to be results of political manipulation and ulterior motives.

Even without support from the national or local government there haven't been any significant general setbacks in terms of longer periods of decline in numbers of tourist arrivals. Natural disasters, military coups in Manila, and kidnappings of tourists in other tourist sites in the Philippines do not seem to affect Sabang's tourism scene. Of course, throughout the years individual establishments have been less successful and closed, but as a whole the extent of the tourism industry has continuously gained more and more ground, both literally and metaphorically.

While concerns for overdevelopment are voiced by Filipino locals, expats, and returning tourists, there is also sense of Sabang becoming developed, urbanized, and modern. For several years, a painting displaying a vision of Sabang's future hung at the *Barangay* Hall, showing Sabang as a city with tall buildings, a large pier where the *bancas* could anchor, and a highway along the beach. It was a picture of a vision of a Sabang highly urbanized and modern.⁹ The painting signals how much is invested in the promises of further tourism development. This view of the future was certainly not shared by all locals; several informants said they also saw this image as a potential threat to Sabang's tourism industry, being well aware that a majority of the tourists would prefer a considerably less urbanized Sabang, and because they themselves preferred Sabang to remain a small, quiet village by the ocean. However, development and increased pressure on Sabang has also come at costs. And Marissa, a Filipina who moved to Sabang in the mid-2000s with her expat boyfriend says: "Many, many foreigners tell me that it's like paradise here. But where is this paradise? I'm always thinking; where is this paradise?" She knew of the foreigners' wishes to visit a tropical haven, but in her experience Sabang is overpopulated and polluted – both environmentally and morally due to the extensive sex industry. Although people now fear that Sabang is on the verge of losing its small, coastal *barangay* charm, in a global tourism perspective Sabang is still considered as 'off the beaten track'; it's not Ibiza, or even the Philippine equivalent, the popular beach tourist site Boracay. Although now relatively developed, Sabang is still a comparatively small, seaside Philippine *barangay*, and no national or international hotel or food chains have found their way there.

⁹ A photograph of this painting was often used in interviews when I wanted informants to reflect on the possible future developments of Sabang (see Chapter 1, *Introduction*).

But expats who lived in Sabang during the late 1980s and 1990s often talk nostalgically about a feeling of community between the expats, of having ‘crazy fun’ together and a relaxed atmosphere. Today these expats often complain also about a loss of social cohesion amongst themselves. The number of expats is felt by these ‘old-timers’ to have become too great; they no longer know each other by name or face, and conflicts and competing interest have created social divisions. Sabang and the newer expats have become focused on business rather than on enjoying themselves. However, even with responsibilities of the new and larger enterprises, the more recent expats also express that Sabang was chosen as a site for their enterprises because of the tropical location and relaxed atmosphere. The expats I talked to often described Sabang as a good place for both life and business.

There is nevertheless a widespread frustration among locals, who feel they can’t get an overview of what’s happening. I was often told by informants of how they now fear that Sabang soon will reach a breaking point, that neither the infrastructure nor the environment can handle further expansion of the tourism sector, that too many people sharing the relatively small space will lead to overpopulation and pollution, and that eventually the attractiveness of Sabang as a tropical paradise will be lost. Several locals argue that the local government has allowed the growth of tourism to spiral out of control, or perhaps more specifically, that there has been a lack of control over developments. My informants often sigh and argue that local the authorities have been blinded by the prospects of profit rather than environmental and social sustainability: “They just allow it to grow,” was a common phrase I heard. The authorities had understandably no experience of managing such growth of tourism. There have indeed been attempts to regulate the development of tourism and its effects, but these have tended to short term, short sighted, and poorly implemented and have rarely yielded any concrete and lasting results. Developing sustainable means to govern tourism has proven to be a slow and complicated process.

The critique of the local and national governments’ capability of surpassing old political power structures to accommodate the new needs that tourism development has entailed is also often accurate. As with many other Filipino tourism sites, the management of tourism development in

Sabang has often been weak, and the tourism sector has grown spontaneously, with little support from national or local authorities (Bersales 1999; Nicholson 1997; Smith 1992; Trousdale 1999; WWF 2005: 12). Nonetheless, the national government has taken some general nationwide initiatives for environmental preservation for touristic purposes. For example, in order to maintain the appeal of the Philippines as a beach destination, a Presidential Decree signed in 1981 prohibits permanent buildings closer than 25 meters from the high tide mark (PD-1805). In Sabang, however, the *barangay* council continued to approve construction violating the decree. Several resorts and restaurants are constructed close to the shoreline, a number of them directly on the high tide mark. The already narrow beaches are thus further limited by these resorts and restaurants, and at high tide one can't walk from one end of Sabang to the other without either climbing across buildings or getting soaking wet.

There are thus continuing problems with infrastructure, felt to be inhibiting the potential of further development, such as insufficient access due to lack of comfortable and reliable means of transportation, sewage and garbage disposal, electricity and water shortage, and land shortage. Houses and resorts are constructed with little regard to overall sustainability, and often existing regulations are not enforced. For example, all prospective buildings are to be approved by the *Barangay* Council. The Council has guidelines regarding design, durability, and sustainability, but these have often been ignored, leading to ad hoc constructions and buildings are approved disregarding existing national, or even locally stipulated regulations. In spite of the ever-increasing demands to economize land use, the *Barangay* Council previously denied applications seeking to construct buildings taller than two stories at the beachfront. It was argued the beachfront properties were not to reduce the attractiveness of inland areas by obscuring the commercially attractive sea view. However, due to the pressure of finding ways to further exploit Sabang, this ambition has been abandoned. The previous low silhouette of Sabang is continuously growing taller.

Puerto Galera, in particular Sabang, faces problems in accommodating the steadily growing number of tourists and residents. The infrastructure required for maintaining the tourism sector is underdeveloped. The water and electricity supply is unreliable, and brownouts and periods of

water shortage are not uncommon. The larger population has also led to an increase in demand for transportation. The beaches are now crowded with *banca*s, and on the poor roads, *jeepneys*, trucks, *tricycles*, and motorcycles struggle to carry people and goods. Moreover, although all households are required to install a septic tank in order to prevent waste water flowing into the ocean, this has in many cases not been implemented comprehensively. Even the resorts' septic tanks are sometimes inadequate and criticized for merely being holes in the ground (PGF 2007 4: 10, Feb. 1-15: 9). Household water waste from washing machines, showers, and sinks is often allowed to run straight into small canals in the back of the houses and resorts, or on to the beach and into the ocean. Attempts are being made to centralize garbage collection, but often household garbage is often left in large, smelly heaps in the back of the living areas, occasionally disposed of by burning.

Throughout the development process, land has become more and more commercially valuable and, and trees and gardens have turned into concrete building to accommodate the ever-growing number of people living, visiting, and working in Sabang. Wiss (2005: 32) describes Sabang as "a concrete village," a place where little natural vegetation is found, and subsistence farming is no longer an option. Locals pointed out to me that part of the beaches used to be covered with mangroves, but that these were cut down to make the beaches available to tourists and to construct cemented walking paths along the shorelines. The marine life close to shore was soon diminished. A living coral reef reached the beach in the late 1990s, but pollution, increased *banca* traffic and anchoring, snorkelers' negligent behavior, and several severe typhoons have led to extensive coral death. Instead there has been a tremendous growth of algae, which washes up on the beaches, spreading an unpleasant odor. The formerly white sand on the beaches has turned dark and polluted, making them unattractive to potential sunbathers. Today only one of the three beaches, Big Lalaguna, is suitable for swimming and snorkeling. The pollution of the beaches is a great source of regret for locals who have witnessed this deterioration of the environment.

The temptation to describe socio-cultural changes brought about by tourism in terms of threats to and destruction of a paradise is a strong one in tourism anthropology. For example, numerous articles and books bear

titles such as “Assault on Paradise” (Kottak 1992), “Trouble in Paradise” (Want 2002), or “The Threatened Paradise” (Smekal 2006), indicating central themes in tourism studies when attempting to grasp the multitude of transformations specific sites face an influx of tourism. The reference to paradise is also often strategically emphasized in tourism marketing and a powerful tool when attracting tourists to the sites. And a potential threat to this image may have serious local consequences. The emphases on threats to these paradise-like sites highlight the often-complex backdrops of structural inequalities, conflicts over resources, frictions between the tourists and the local populations, of environmental degradation and intensive exploitation and commercialization of tourist sites, and this also applies to Sabang. The association between a Paradise and a Paradise Lost is also close in the discussions of tourism development in Sabang, and people fear that Sabang soon will not be able to offer the tourists a paradise-like experience; most locals I talked to agree that growth has largely been unchecked and unregulated.



Big Lalaguna in the early 1980s. (Photo by David Tellman.)



The same view thirty years later.

People in Sabang are articulate in what they see as positive aspects as well as negative consequences of tourism, and they can be described as evincing a postnormative stance (Ness 2003: 22; Wood 1997: 3). Tourism as such is not deemed either good or bad, but there are consequences to its development. While business opportunities that make it possible to earn a living in Sabang and meet people from almost all over the world are often stated as benefits, tourism is also seen as having led to loss of social cohesion and degradation of the environment.

Concluding Remarks

Today tourism is embedded in most people's daily lives, local economy, politics, and social relations. Fishing, which was previously important, is no longer undertaken, and instead tourism has become the most important source of livelihood. How did Sabang become a tourist town? What then have the contributing factors been in this process of transformation? I have pointed out the character of local tourism development as gradual. It was initially slow, but it has intensified due to the interplay between foreign tourists' demand for leisure and locals' capabilities of meeting these. In this process, many Filipino locals were able to transition from poverty to relative affluence.

Tourism development and the process of local tourism production have also brought with them processes of displacement. A new economy was introduced, built on global and transnational ties and leading to new patterns of production and consumption. With these transformations, new boundaries between now and then developed, and these boundaries were intimately tied to changes in the identification of place. Sabang is remembered as a place of social cohesion and order, which is contrasted with a view of Sabang as a place increasingly inhabited by outsiders. However, the inhabitants of Sabang generally refrain from passing overall judgements on tourism development, and my informants point out that with the bad, such as a deterioration of social cohesion and sense of lack of control over development, many good things have come, foremost sources of livelihood and increased living standards.

Tourism functions as a catalyst in the narratives of change. The past

has become a central point of reference for self-identification for foremost local Filipinos. A shared past gives them a strong sense of belonging and of entitlement to Sabang. The contrast between the past and the present also acts as a symbol for transformations, and the stories of Sabang before tourism illustrate what people now identify that they were, and simultaneously how they view themselves in the present.

Sabang is a place where one can combine business with pleasure. However, with increased tourism development people now fear that Sabang is on the verge of losing its small, coastal *barangay* charm. Sabang is still a place that attracts those looking for a laid-back place to stay, either for a vacation or permanently. Foreigners settle in Sabang owing to the opportunities for pursuing a relaxed lifestyle in a paradise-like town. However, Sabang still constitutes the foundation of 'home' and a 'good place for business,' as many expats and Filipinos say. But how to conduct business, or how to live and behave in Sabang is not something everyone agrees about, and in particular Filipinos and Westerners often have different opinions in such matters. These are issues I discuss in the next chapter.

3. Local Representations of Cultures

Introduction

Tourism development opens numerous ways for people from different parts of the world to interact, and in these interactions stereotypical notions of the Other tend to flourish. In Sabang Filipinos stereotype Westerners and vice versa, Westerners have preconceptions of each other, Filipinos have stereotypical notions of other Filipinos, and they all have narrow views of Koreans, who constitute the newest group of foreigners in Sabang, an issue that will be addressed in Chapter 8, *The New Others*. All these perceptions offer possibilities for analyzing and understanding transnational relations and the processes involved in the construction of the Other. The international tourism industry in Sabang functions much like an “otherness machine” (Aitchison 2001: 144). Through tourism, people get the opportunity to compare themselves with each other.

By focusing on tourism development in Sabang and in particular its effects on the interplay between various constructions of cultural boundaries, this chapter will illuminate how these boundaries are manifested, performed, and interpreted. Sameness is also articulated, but cultural differences and boundaries were far more prevalent in conversations with informants. Difference-making in relations to tourism is something in which virtually all inhabitants in Sabang are involved; it is a source of concern and negotiation and ambiguity. Even so, people must gain something for these distinctions to be sustained and maintained. The last part of the chapter examines how constructions of difference might be related to how cross-cultural encounters through tourism are infused with notions of cultural continuities and disruptions. The chapter thus focuses on three questions: How are notions of cultural difference in Sabang constructed in relation to tourism? How do people deal with

cultural differences in their daily lives in Sabang? Why are these differences important to maintain?

The Housekeeping Seminars

How are notions of cultural difference in Sabang constructed in relation to tourism? In a discussion of the mishmash of cultural stereotypes in Sabang's tourism scene it is important to keep in mind that cultural stereotypes are taught and learned. I had the opportunity to partake in an event where stereotypes in the tourism scene were taught to a particular segment of Sabang's Filipino population, namely the housemaids (the locally used term for hotel maid).

The local Department of Tourism office and local tourism NGOs lamented a lack of proper professionalism in the local tourism industry, that *jeepney* and *tricycle* drivers were rude to customers, they said, the front desk personnel at resorts weren't attentive enough, and the standard of housekeeping at the hotels could be improved. The concern of the tourism organizations was that tourists would find the personnel offensive and not up to their idea of an 'international standard.' As a response, several courses were offered to educate the various employees of the tourism industry to enable them to meet domestic and international tourists' supposed service expectations.



Together with my assistant I attended one of these courses, a two-day course called “Housekeeping Seminars,” which aimed at teaching the housemaids proper conduct and ways to clean and maintain accommodations. When arriving at the venue I realized a lot of effort had been put into this course. A large tarpaulin hanging over the street welcomed us, and the food that was offered was elaborate: there was more meat than customary in the *pancit bibon* (a noodle dish), and the spring rolls were larger than usual. We were also supplied with a notebook that had pictures of Asian (though not Filipino) pop groups on the covers and a pen. During the course, local officials held speeches and even the municipal Mayor Aristeo Atienza visited and gave a speech. We also had a graduation ceremony at the end of the course, where we received diplomas certifying that we had completed the course. All this lent weight and authority to the efforts to educate the housemaids.

The main lecturer was the manager of two of Manila’s luxury hotels, and his presence gave the course an air of being international and classy. The lecturer made a lot of jokes, many of them sexual in nature, which seemed to both embarrass and entertain the participants, judging from the gasps and laughter his jokes were met with.

During the course, we were taught the differences between types of hotels, rooms, and beds, as well as practical aspects of making up a room. We were instructed how to prepare a bed properly, fold the tip of the toilet paper into a neat triangle, different techniques to fold towels, which we also tried to do with giggles, although my swan-shaped towel just would not materialize. We were also told about customer privacy and proper treatment of their belongings. While we were urged to respect the guests’ privacy, we were also advised to draw conclusions from their waste and belongings, just to learn more about them, which we were told would improve our level of service. For example, if you find a wrapping paper from a particular chocolate in the trash can you could see to it that this customer is given this brand of chocolate the next time he enters the room. Knowing more about your customer could in turn be a strategy to elicit substantial tips, we were informed. It was apparent that the teacher attempted to instill self-esteem in the participants by informing them about the importance of their work. The housemaids were told not to view their work as a dead-end. If they worked well, they could advance in the hotel sector.



How to correctly hang towels.

A representative of the municipal authority encouraged us to feel pride in the local social and natural environment and he said: “We are gifted by God by the natural beauty of Puerto Galera” and “we are the most hospitable people in the world.” He also repeated the frequently expressed notion of tourism dependency: since Puerto Galera has no significant agriculture, its inhabitants all relied on nature and on peoples’ smiles. Hospitality was identified as one of the main Filipino values, and they all needed to maintain good ties with the tourists. Tourism, the municipal authority exhorted, was of the uttermost importance for the community, and housemaids were a part of this; therefore it was important for them to do a good job.

We were also taught what to expect of customers of different nationalities, in a joking manner that often ridiculed foreigners. We were told that Americans only bathe (defined as using soap) once a week, and when they do bathe they take a bubble bath with a glass of wine and lit candles, as often seen on TV. We also learned that the black matter between the tiles in the showers was not mold but the result of foreigners’ dirty nasal mucus, which was so sticky it couldn’t easily be washed away, and also that some foreigners are so unhygienic that the rooms should be left vacant a couple of days after their stay. This course took place at the beginning of the rise of the Korean tourist arrivals, and although the number of Korean tourists had increased in Sabang, they were still fairly unknown to most locals, and to me. The lecturer informed us that Koreans wash their underwear every night and hang it to dry on the lamp shade. We were not told why they had this particular habit, but we were

taught by an authority on the subject of tourist accommodation that this was the case.

Ridiculing foreigners is not a new phenomenon amongst local Filipinos. Members of the older generation laughingly told me stories about how they used to say words referring to genitals in Tagalog to the first tourists in Sabang, who remained unaware of the insult just uttered. In the older generation's narratives, the Other was an inferior. One elderly woman said, for example: "In the beginning we compared the tourists with the Mangyans, like the minority. We described them as Mangyans, because they were different and didn't speak Tagalog." Calling the first foreigners Mangyans was derogatory: Mangyans are hardly ever described in any other way. Also in more contemporary encounters foreigners are sometimes ridiculed by Filipinos, such as by being ignored if experienced as overly demanding, and talked about in Tagalog in front of them (since foreigners are assumed not to know Tagalog) about the strange things they spend their money on or how odd they look. Westerners' often sweaty body odor is also a common topic in these comments. Furthermore, a common way of resisting foreigners' expectations of efficiency is by delay of service, and to ignore a tourist's waving hands.

I interpret the joking, ignoring, and commenting as strategies of resistance. They offer a glimpse of the Filipino's meaning-making of the tourists. The mocking and joking show us how Filipinos take control of interactions and performances (Aitchison 2001: 144). Joking about the foreigners may be a way of negotiating the common representation of oneself and foreigners, and the assumed hierarchical discrepancies, thus offering a form of counter narrative to the postcolonial positions Filipinos and foreigners often are locked into (Tucker & Akama 2009). The wealthy (and high-status) foreigners are not always in a position of control over the social and cross-cultural encounter. The ridiculing can also be seen as a way of making sense of strange or incomprehensible preferences or behaviors.

Tourism and Constructions of Differences

In tourism, notions of the Other are often constructed and maintained, often as the allure of the different is a main motivator for tourism destinations. The constructions of cultural differences and boundaries involve most inhabitants in Sabang, and it is a part of daily life and people have multiple encounters throughout the day; they may meet in stores, through work, at the hotel, when traveling, through scuba diving or when they engage in commercial sex.

My informants express notions of similarity, cohabitation, understanding, and tolerance. Many of my informants argue that Filipinos and Westerners are more similar than different – they are after all human beings. People also generally try their best to get along, and to have peace and quiet. There is a collective interest in keeping Sabang tranquil, not only for personal reasons, but also for the businesses that depend upon on maintaining an image of Sabang as an untroubled tropical paradise. Nevertheless, ideas about otherness were something I encountered practically daily in Sabang. Ideas of cultural differences were popular topics of discussions in interviews, at the pubs and go-go bars and were commented on in a wide variety of situations, such as when riding a *jeepney*, at the market, by beach vendors, or by bar girls and their customers.

The Philippines is often depicted as a highly Westernized country – by tourists, expats, Filipiniana scholars, in guidebooks, and by local Filipinos themselves. This is widely understood to be a socio-cultural result of the country's double colonial past (by Spain 1521–1898 and the U.S. 1898–1946). A popular saying is that the country is shaped by “350 years in a convent and 50 years of Hollywood.” To a Western eye, the Philippines in general does not project the general allure of the ‘Asian,’ as exotic in language, religion, culture, or traditions, and it is often represented as lacking an ‘authentic indigenous culture,’ at least not in regards to majority population.

There has been a tremendous academic debate and among my informants in Sabang regarding a presumed lack of cultural integrity and authenticity in Philippine majority culture, which mainly consists of the ‘lowland’ parts of the population (often constructed as opposed to the highland, indigenous cultures, such as Mangyans). ‘Filipino culture’

has often been deemed damaged, inauthentic, and imitative, and the Filipinos have been accused by scholars of not being truly Asian but merely the “Brown Americans of Asia” as the Filipino historian Renato Perdon (1998) put it, and controlled by their “colonial minds,” as stated by the anthropologist Niels Mulder (1992: xii). Phrases such as “national integration is incomplete in the Philippines,” as expressed by the historian David Steinberg (1990: 36), and “there is no denying that Philippine society also suffers from a historical affliction called colonial mentality” (Mulder 1992: 147) are easily found in analyses of Filipino culture and society, leading the Philippines to be “considered the most Westernized people in the Asian Region” (Perdon 1998: xvii). There are those who have questioned this depiction of Philippine culture as “broken” and have instead pointed out that socio-cultural traits in contemporary Philippines are indeed worthy of anthropological attention (Cannell 1999; Rosaldo 1988).

Influenced by postcolonial thought, the tourism scholar Keith Hollinshead (1998: 121) argues that tourism studies have “tended to comfortably and axiomatically think only in terms of pristine, intact, and well-bounded cultures which distinctively attract visitors or which singularly celebrate themselves.” Tourism is often underpinned by colonial narratives, which also reinforces colonialism (Tucker & Akama 2009), since both the visited places and the people living there are represented in a colonial fashion. However, in line a general scholarly critique of essentialist notions of culture, ethnicity, and identity tourism, researchers began re-examining biases implicit in such assumptions (C.M. Hall & Tucker 2004; Hollinshead 1998). With a reassessment of ‘culture’ and in effect also the potential impact one culture can have on another it, became more plausible to view culture as constructed, continuously changing, reshaped, contested, fluid, or, to put it inelegantly: as something complex, more so than often assumed previously. For a tourist destination, it can be important to be able to promote itself as culturally ‘genuine’ or ‘untouched,’ since authenticity continues to be a highly prized feature in global tourism. Although the perspective of ‘Filipino culture’ as something that in fact *can* be broken or inauthentic may be academically outdated, in Sabang cultural authenticity is still a source of concern not only among foreign visitors but also for local Filipinos. There is a widespread sense

of insecurity and perhaps also anxiety when it comes to identifying what is considered Filipino and Western. The notions of cultural differences between Filipinos and Westerners are dynamic and negotiated. This is the case in most formulations of identities, but what is particular here is how stereotypes are linked to the development of the local tourism sector.

In Sabang, distinctions between 'Filipino' and 'Western' sets of socio-cultural values are central components of everyday interactions. Images of essentialized cultures are used strategically to produce images of oneself and the Other. The local Filipinos represent a different lifestyle for many of the Westerners I got to know, comprising something that has been lost in the West, and something viewed as worthy and in need of protection. Michael, a long-time American expat, thinks that Filipinos are closer to a natural state of being. When we were discussing a local Marine Protected Area, where fishing is illegal, Michael told me: "Filipinos in general are hunters, you know. From way back in the beginning of time. You can't take that away from them, that's part of their soul. I feel wrong to even try to tell these people to stop hunting; that's in their blood." In Michael's view, Filipinos are examples of the noble savage. Many of the Westerners (and some Filipinos) told me repeatedly of how they viewed Filipinos as more in touch with basic human needs and values than Westerners. They don't live hectic, by-the-clock lives. They value family and friends; they live life at a slower pace, and they care for their families.

Michael expresses a common myth of third-world societies as unchanged, as if time has been standing still and the peoples and culture are closer to an original state of being, a representation of an idea of being in an earlier stage of evolution. This kind of myth and representation of the Filipinos reproduces a colonial discourse that in turn contributes to maintaining postcolonial relations, a common theme in postcolonial tourism studies (Aitchison 2001; d'Hautesserre 2011; Bandyopadhyay & Morais 2005; Echtner & Prasad 2003). Michael's manner of formulating the Filipino as hunters articulates a notion of Filipinos as different. This difference builds on notions of social and cultural evolution. In the construction of the Filipino as closer to nature, a hierarchical notion of evolution is often invoked, which is used by Westerners to position themselves as more evolved, better educated and more knowledgeable in things concerning the modern, contemporary world, such as having better

knowledge of capitalism and thus how businesses should be operated. A solution to this persistent notion of superiority is suggested to lie in communication, that the Other (in this case Filipinos) should be given a voice and offered spaces for counter-narratives, and that they find common meeting grounds (Amoamo 2011; C.M. Hall & Tucker 2004b; Osagie & Buzinde 2011). While Filipinos would not agree that they are “still hunters,” many of the narratives of what is meant by ‘Filipino’ and ‘foreign’ respectively, and how they are valued, are expressed similarly among Filipinos and foreigners.

There is a degree of critique of the West that is also voiced in foreigners’ tales of the Filipino as closer to basic human nature. The Filipino is sometimes constructed by foreigners as a potential counterforce to a homogenized world, where the West is constructed as having become detached from a ‘natural’ state of human life, as not prioritizing family, putting personal gain before that of one’s loved ones. This last perspective of Westerners was often related to me also by my Filipino informants. There is thus an element of critique of the changes of recent decades, and locals often turn to romanticized notions of the past and a shared notion of an unspoiled society and ideal versions of the ‘true’ Filipino. However, when I talked to Filipinos and asked them about what they saw was ‘typically Filipino,’ many started out by saying that they were Roman Catholics, had ‘good morals’ or ‘high morality,’ (as Filipinos expressed it) and that they took care of their family members. This was often almost immediately contrasted with Westerners, who were described as non-religious and immoral because they engage in commercial sex and send their elderly to nursing homes.

Despite notions of the majority culture of ‘lowland’ Filipinos as bearers of a ‘damaged culture,’ they are still constructed by both Filipino informants as well as Western ones in Sabang as ‘having culture’ to a greater degree than their Western counterparts. On the other hand, this culture it is seen as a result of a problematic history and being currently at risk due to exposure to tourists through tourism development. Filipino culture is described by both Filipinos and Westerners as genuine, but adapted, or “authentic, though not exotic,’ as one scholar of Filipino culture puts it (Zialcita 2005). The anthropologist Noel B. Salazar (2012: 871) notes that: “Discourses of the past – orientalism, colonialism and imperialism –

seem to be fertile grounds for nostalgic and romantic tourism dreams.” In Sabang these dreams of a different past are often partly shared by tourists and locals, though not identically. A past of “high morality,” of social order and cohesion, is imagined by Filipino locals. Westerners, on the other hand, tend to talk about a ‘past-in-the-present’ of a relaxed lifestyle, beyond or before a time felt to be filled with modern-day demands and stress.

Filipino versions of their past are predominantly a past ingrained by Spanish colonialism and Catholicism. These things are identified as ‘genuinely Filipino.’ In Westerners’ accounts of the Filipino past, on the other hand, it is the potential of finding *precolonial* cultural traits that are highlighted, and a world view less dependent on commercial consumption. On a general level, the Westerner’s accounts tend to reinforce a postcolonial perspective that dominates in the West’s depictions of tourist sites in developing countries as ‘unchanged’ and ‘primitive.’ But the Philippines in general and Sabang in particular were also described by foreigners as culturally altered. The Spanish and American influences were often pointed out to me by tourists and expats, such as the fact that Filipinos were Roman Catholics, the education system as influenced by the American system, that many of the dishes hailed as ‘Filipino’ bear Spanish names and are influenced by their Spanish counterparts such as *adobo*, *apritada*, or *kaldereta* or the festive roasted pig, *lechon*. On countless occasions I encountered Westerners eager to point out to me that what I saw around me wasn’t ‘really Filipino,’ that much of the country had been ruined by colonization. Filipinos were not described as just like the West (or its colonizers), but as culturally compromised by it.

There are thus discrepancies between the populations in the idealized visions of the origins of today’s ‘Filipino culture.’ The Filipinos’ counter-narratives emphasize their superiority in terms of morality, religion, and social obligations. These discrepancies illuminate the different vested interests in the past, one in which Catholic morality prevailed and one that was untouched by colonization, and also show how the past is not agreed upon, and that narratives of the past are informed by wishes of the present.

An Inauthentic Culture for Sale?

Tourism was seen by many of my Filipino and foreign informants as posing a threat to Philippine cultural integrity and that the cultural boundaries between Filipinos and foreigners have lessened due to tourism development, that the Filipinos have become acculturated and “become like the foreigners,” as many said, that they have undergone a process of acculturation. Something of essential value in the representation of the Filipino is said to have been lost or transformed due to tourism.

Several tourists and expats I talked with identified Filipino culture as a mere a mixture of influences from their former colonizers, and now from exposure to foreign ways through tourism. A Dutch tourist who visited the Philippines for the first time exclaimed: “There’s no culture here! Look at them [pointing at a group of Filipinos passing by]! They dress the way we do, just jeans and a T-shirt. It’s just like home. It doesn’t feel like I’m abroad. I don’t hate America, but they export their culture all over the world. Like here... It’s the same, only different faces. I like it better in Indonesia; there they have a different culture. I’m not staying here much longer. I’d rather go somewhere else in Asia.”

Those tourists who expected Sabang to fulfill expectations of untouched, exotic, and precolonial culture often expressed disappointment. One evening I was talking to Derek, a British tourist in his mid-20s, at a karaoke bar. He was in the Philippines for work and in Sabang over the weekend. When talking about his experiences of the Philippines, he told me how he had been in remote areas of the country, where he claimed no other foreigners had ever been before. He recounted how the children in the village had screamed with excitement when they saw him and clung to him. At this point he stretched out his arms and then started to make movements as to shake off the imaginary children hanging on him. That, Derek said, was the *real* Philippines, and that those people were living like *real* Filipinos. He felt that Sabang was far from authentic. It was not even Filipino. He supported this statement by complaining how Filipinos in Sabang had let themselves become commercialized: “Everything and everyone is for sale,” he exclaimed, “all they care about is money. They even sell their children for money!” When I objected, he insisted on proving his point to me. Derek called the attention of the emcee of the

karaoke bar. He pointed at the white knitted beanie the emcee was wearing and asked to buy it. The emcee looked confused and took the beanie off and stretched out his hand to give it to Derek. Derek continued saying “I’ll buy it, I’ll buy it,” seemingly not hearing the emcee saying that if he wanted the beanie he could have it, as a gift. Derek took the beanie and pressed a bill of 100 pesos (USD 2) into the emcee’s hand. Then he turned to me and said: “You see, everything’s for sale.”

Derek’s interaction with the emcee reproduces his idea that Filipinos are “for sale,” as well as his perception of Filipino culture as “ruined by commercialism.” He did so by wittingly or unwittingly disregarding the emcee’s attempts to react politely and culturally appropriately, and Derek created a situation that was in accordance with his own preconceptions of Philippine culture, and he did so by disregarding the emcee’s attempts to act according to his views of it and the situation.

Sabang’s visible and vital sex scene – which Derek told me it was his main reason for visiting Sabang – also contributes to an image of the inauthenticity of local culture and society. The go-go bars and the interactions that take place in them are perceived by both tourists and Filipino locals as the ultimate representations of commercialization (which is often seen as the opposite of cultural integrity and authenticity) of interactions and people. In a sense Derek’s actions represent the classic dilemma faced by many tourists – tourists seek the ‘untouched’ and ‘authentic,’ while simultaneously reshaping the places they visit with their actions and demands.

Dealing with the Other: Resolving Conflicts

How do people deal with cultural difference in their daily lives in Sabang? Representations of cultural differences are particularly prominent in regard to norms of social behavior. In Westerners’ tales of conflicts, they portray themselves as individualistic, straightforward, and rational, while the Filipinos are constructed as focused on the collective, acting indirectly and emotionally. This is largely a shared construction that most of my Filipino and foreign informants agree on, at least superficially.

Kurt was a long-time German expat in his 60s who owned a small resort

with a diving shop, a restaurant, and a couple of tourist accommodations. Several other expats as well as Filipinos engaged in the tourism industry suggested that I should talk to Kurt. He was known for his involvement in issues relating to tourism, such as the local diver's association. Kurt was willing to talk with me and my assistant, and the interview took place at his beachside restaurant. I was interested in talking to him because of his long-time involvement in the diver's association, as I knew that it had long worked with local authorities in formulating regulations for diving tourism. I had passed by Kurt's diving shop every day for months, and I was curious to learn more about him and his views of tourism development in Sabang, and about his golden retriever who seemed to spend more time in the ocean than not – understandably since her impressive fur was not well suited for the sweltering heat of the tropics.

Kurt proved to be a highly articulate man with strong opinions on many topics, such as diving, environmental issues, and Filipino-foreigner relations. He was reluctant, however, to talk about his personal life, and he evaded any questions about his life before the present, children, or intimate relationships. Kurt came across as disillusioned and tired of living in Sabang. He was critical of how the tourism growth had been handled, and he told me that he was planning on selling his business and moving to another location in the Philippines. A year or so after our interview he did just that, and I did not see him again. In my interview, Kurt voiced a common stereotype foreigners have of Filipinos: that Filipinos can't deal with conflicts. He said: "If there is a problem: 'Let's not talk about it and maybe it will go away.' So, talking about the problem, attacking a problem and facing it, it is considered a *bastos* [rude] thing. You don't do that because people will be embarrassed." This perspective was not uncommon among foreigners in Sabang. On his visit back in Sabang, Fredrik, a Swede who used to live in Sabang but now was there on vacation, told me about his experiences of having Filipino employees: "The men were the most difficult to deal with. You couldn't say anything to them, not correct them in any way. They lost face and refused to listen to you. It was impossible to get them to do what you wanted." Fredrik realized that there were cultural differences regarding conflict resolution, but he found it difficult to deal with them: "Sure, I know you're not supposed to criticize anyone in public, and I made some mistakes, but I got so frustrated."

A main divide in the local cultural construction is that Filipinos are considered to be sensitive in particular in regard to conflicts, and foreigners are straightforward and deal with conflicts in a direct manner. Kurt and Fredrik both expressed frustration over these differences, and present the Filipinos as not able to handle public confrontation. Although they both acknowledge that Filipinos may be embarrassed if confronted publicly, they seem to believe Filipinos lack the *ability* to handle conflicts. Kurt and Fredrik's views of cultural differences in regard to conflicts were shared by many of my expat informants, and my Filipino informants would often agree with them to a certain extent: that they prefer to avoid confrontations in public, but deal with them at home or at least away from other people's prying eyes and ears. Most of my informants agreed that there were cultural differences at play, and they tried to understand these and to overcome them and reach an understanding. Kurt and Fredrik's experiences and opinions offer starting points for a discussion of how the inhabitants of Sabang deal with ideas of cultural differences in regards to conflict resolution.

Kurt draws on his 20 years of living and working in the Philippines: "It's very hard especially if you have a Western style of production and you have to have Filipinos doing the work. We have totally different sets of values when it comes to solving problems, which are inevitable when having a business. It is probably one of the most difficult things to do; to marry the two cultures." Kurt continued by defining what he views as a Filipino and a Western reaction to having an open conflict: "Like in conflict solving, it is considered very bad manners in this country. You can't even look the problem in the eye and discuss it. Let's say, that you [Elina] do something I don't like, I'd tell you that. This is the way how we deal with problems. We may scream at each other for a while and let some of the guys see this, you know, but the next day we sit down together and have another beer." This self-image was confirmed in numerous talks I had with expats: that they deal with conflicts directly, while in their view the Filipinos did everything to avoid them. Filipinos expressed a similar view of Westerners. Renata, a woman in her 60s, a life-long resident of Sabang, who runs a small resort and a restaurant, says: "When they [foreigners] are fighting, they are really confronting (*barap-barapan*) each other. But we Filipinos are not like... it seems like, we talk." Renata describes the

Western type of conflict: “Yes, they are fighting, but afterwards they are okay: the attitude of the foreigners is like that.”

Kurt contrasts the idealized Western way of dealing with conflicts with Filipino practices: “This is inconceivable for the Filipinos, inconceivable. The minute you say any harsh words and you actually confront someone in public, this is the worst thing, and later, or for the rest of your life, you can’t talk to that person anymore. [...] So, basically problem solving is considered an odd manner, it’s simply not done. [...] You can sit there and the minute you try to confront the person, the average Filipino will now be extremely embarrassed, and he will be put on guard because that is not his way. It goes against his upbringing. You make him very, very uncomfortable when solving problems in a rational way. The usual outlet for this kind of thing is emotional. They usually end up (he makes a sound effect, poof)”.

Kurt’s recounting of the differences between Filipino and Westerners ways of dealing with conflicts may seem exaggerated. However, many of the Western tourists and expats I talked to expressed the same opinions, though not always in such harsh terms. How to overcome cultural differences, and specifically ‘Filipino’ and ‘Foreign’ (implicitly Western) ways of dealing with conflicts, is also dealt with academically. The anthropologist F. Landa Jocano dedicated a book to the issue entitled: *Working with Filipinos: A Cross-cultural Encounter* (1999). Jocano’s aim is to explain Filipino culture and manner of doing business to foreigners in order to facilitate business relations. In the process, stereotypes similar to those advanced by Kurt are expressed, but from a Filipino perspective: Filipinos think Americans are very bossy, insensitive to how others feel, and direct and confrontational (Jocano 1999: 13). The more popularly written *Culture Shock: A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette* by Alfredo Roces & Grace Roces (2006) also pays attention to what the authors view as Filipino sensitivity when it comes to issues of saving face, or maintaining one’s honor, something that foreigners are assumed to have difficulty grasping. Most expats and tourists I met were well aware of Filipinos’ wish to avoid public conflicts or criticizing in public, but I often got the impression that this knowledge didn’t always result in behavior accommodating this wish, and that they grew impatient with Filipino avoidance of public conflicts.

But conflicts amongst expats are at times intense and long-lasting, and

not dealt with directly. Conflicts may arise for a multitude of reasons, such as through conflicting interests in conducting businesses or merely personal preferences. Conflicts between people from the West are not necessarily 'faced' in a confrontational manner. Westerners may, for example, simply refrain from visiting the bars known to be patronized by their enemy, and interactions between the individuals and groups of friends involved in the conflict are minimized. Furthermore, when talking to Kurt and other expats, I often got the impression that the expats interpreted Filipinos' reluctance to take measures such as direct confrontations to be an indication of lack of *any* Filipino way of dealing with conflicts. Kurt juxtaposed Filipino avoidance of public conflicts with his notions of a Western direct way of dealing with conflicts. When talking about meeting, or "marrying the two cultures," as he put it, he primarily focused on how *Filipinos* need to change, and how they need to be "educated" in the art of conflict solving and be less provincial or backwards. When expressing 'culture' in the form of dealing with conflicts, the ways local Filipinos do it is not identified as an expression of culture but as a lack of experience and education.

Not all conflicts among Filipinos are, of course, dealt with in a stereotypical 'Filipino fashion' and to 'save face,' through talking and using go-betweens to mediate, and in the end perhaps involving the heads of the household or the *Barangay* Captain (Jocano 1999: 94). However, I witnessed only a couple of incidences where harsh words were openly expressed, and then between Filipino men who seemed intoxicated or between bar girls or bar girls and their customers who were snapping at each other. Nonetheless, from a Filipino perspective Westerners are often identified as overly aggressive. Renata says that one of the main differences between Filipinos and foreigners is how to deal with criticism: "They're really different. They have different attitudes; Filipinos are just adjusting to them. You know, tourists have different attitudes even though they are nice." Renata particularly points out foreigners' tendencies to express criticism in public, which most Filipinos find to be rude: "When they've seen something wrong with you, they will chide you, like that; that is the difference. That's what I know; they're fond of chiding."

From a Filipino perspective, foreigners' interpersonal relationships are often described as being based on individualism. The foreigners are seen

as setting their own needs ahead of the needs of others, and have a hard time grasping the concept of social refinement, or *delikatesa*. By displaying negative emotions publicly, criticizing others, and being confrontational, they are often deemed insensitive, and as Renata said: “fond of chiding.” Foreigners are identified as lacking the necessary social skills required to deal with conflicts in an appropriate manner. Most Filipinos I know to try to accept that Westerners’ behaviors and social values are different, but it’s something they find problematic and a topic they often return to. Adjusting to the foreigners is a recurrent theme in Filipinos accounts, emphasizing their own refined sense of socially correct behavior, as well as the foreigners’ lack thereof. As Renata told me: “There are those who are nice but there are also those who are impertinent (*walang hiya*, literally: having no shame). There are more of those who are nice, who talk nicely to people.” Renata is clear on which customers she prefers: “Those with less complaints, those are nice; they deal with us nicely, they understand, they talk nicely. There are some who make an effort to understand and there are some who don’t.” When talking about customers who behave in a way she perceives as rude, Renata returns to the issue of avoiding conflict in public or direct confrontation: “We try to understand them. If they are really impertinent, we let them go. We understand the others... Sometimes customers come with complaints: ‘Why is it noisy? Why are there so many children? Why are there so many people?’ The main complaint of the tourists is it being noisy. Yes, always complaining: ‘Very noisy! Fuck you! Noisy!’ We just understand the tourist. We really try to understand. We really... if they still have complaints, we just don’t mind it. We just... ignore it.”

Renata expresses a common sentiment among local Filipinos: they just ignore the Westerners’ overly demanding ways. She also illuminates a sense of Filipinos’ hesitation to enter into conflicts in the direct manner Kurt earlier explained to be Western, by stating that she opts to merely “ignore” the impertinence of foreigners. Leah, who is married to an Australian expat, emphasized loyalty to her sense of Filipinoness when talking about her conflicting feelings about cross-cultural conflicts. Leah told me: “When I work with the tourists or foreigners, I do adapt, I can adapt. I can understand them well. So, when foreigners put you down, you don’t show that you’re really affected. ‘It’s nothing.’ You have to be tough,

so they will respect you. [...] But Filipinos are so sensitive. In my life, that's the problem. I'm still sensitive. But I already mingle with the foreigners; I understand the nature of their culture. Sometimes I'm thinking that: 'well, it's true.' But I do lift up Filipinos, all the time with my husband, even though I know it's wrong of me, and it's in a wrong way [the Filipino way], I still do lift it up. The only thing is that it's so hurtful for us, even if it's true, it's still, you know..."

Leah and Renata both refer to Filipino social ideals of a process of mutual accommodation (Cannell 1999: 42). Filipino resistance to foreigners' outward and aggressive ways takes the form of maintaining their equilibrium, adhering to what they perceive as proper, comfortable, and culturally appropriate ways of dealing with conflicts. Filipinos tend to formulate their encounters with foreigners' different ways of dealing with conflicts using words such as "adapt," "adjust," "understand," and "accept." If a mutual understanding is deemed impossible or improbable, one "ignores" the problem or "lets it go," rather than engaging in an open conflict. Local Filipinos now have extensive experience of dealing with Westerners, and when talking about conflicts people often state that "we know their culture already," "we're used to it," or "we have adjusted," indicating their knowledge and experiences when dealing with these foreigners and acceptance of their ways. When conflicts do arise, they describe themselves as solving them by talk, which involves talking to friends and relatives, often handling the issue at hand internally, involving only people considered close when finding the most appropriate to resolve the situation. Also, keeping good ties and taking care not to offend the people you depend upon is seen as crucial, and disturbing the network of family ties and allegiances is risky, as you would not have the support these allegiances give. On a micro-level the Filipinos in Sabang are contesting the foreigner's way of dealing with conflicts by dealing with them in a manner they see appropriate.

The issue of conflicts and conflict resolution is thus a conflict in itself between Filipinos and Westerners. Filipinos and Westerners do agree on the importance of agreement, but disagree on the manner in which to agree. And people tend to start their descriptions of conflict resolution by referring to ideal images of cultural differences, of distinctive Filipino or foreign ways to handle disagreements. With the risk of further

entrenching a Filipino-foreign divide, I would argue that people in Sabang largely maintain their original cultural preferences when it comes to conflict resolution. To be sure, a degree of hybridization can take place, as suggested as desirable by some tourism scholars interested in postcolonial thought in order to bridge discrepancies between the tourists (the colonizers) and the locals (the colonized) (Amoamo 2011; Hollinshead 1998), but my informants talked about upholding differences rather than a cultural merging. People from almost all over the world interact in Sabang daily, and they have conflicts and they solve them. Filipinos and foreigners get married and spend their lives together, and create mutual meeting grounds, but I argue that regarding conflicts a Filipino-Westerner divide is often maintained. As noted previously, outside their own marriages expats rarely seek to be involved in Filipino spheres of life, such as in local politics or social events. And they also tend to have loose affiliations with their home countries. The main source of self-identification seems to be that of being an expat. It is as expats in an expat community they mainly live their lives (see also O'Reilly 2000). It's from this perspective, which is to a great extent based on their experiences of growing up and living in Western countries, they identify what is the typical 'Western' and 'Filipino.'

It should be mentioned that events signaling open Filipino hostility towards tourists are remarkably rare in Sabang. That is not to say conflicts are rare: just that they are usually handled in a discreet manner. It should be said that foreigners and Filipinos all seem to share a wish to keep up appearances: fights, shouting, or harsh words were uncommon in my experiences of Sabang, and mostly related to drunken brawls, although these were also rare considering the amount of alcohol that was consumed, both by Filipinos (particularly during festivities) and foreigners. One rare occurrence took place when I, together with my assistant, was following Norma, a beach fruit vendor, in her work for a day. As we walked along the beach, we ran into a group of beach vendors outside a restaurant who had gathered around a couple of Western tourists who were looking at the items that were offered for purchase. Norma followed the example of the other vendors and approached one of the female tourists. There were quite a number of vendors, all excited at the prospect of doing business. However, the group of tourists was called away, as the trip they were scheduled to go on was about to start. In the general commotion that

this news caused among the beach vendors, who had not succeeded in selling anything, a young man expressed his disappointment by exclaiming as he was walking away: “Fucking tourists, go home!” Otherwise public conflicts and expressions of anger or frustration were unusual, not only because of Filipinos’ preferences to avoid conflicts in public. Keeping things calm and orderly is something most people I talked to regarded as being of the utmost importance, as people were afraid the tourists would not find the place appealing.

Insiders, Outsiders and Ambiguities

It seems fair to say that notions of cultural differences are important to maintain in Sabang. I believe it is related to my Filipino informants’ fears of acculturation. I was often told by Filipinos that: “We have culture here, the foreigners don’t.” By “culture” they generally referred to Roman Catholicism and especially the notions of (primarily sexual) morality associated with it. In Sabang, with its extensive sex tourism, norms of women’s chastity were particularly accentuated. Ideas of moral refinement were furthermore generally identified as central aspects of the Filipino imagining of “our culture.” One way in which Filipinos resist postcolonial constructions of Filipino culture, or the lack thereof, centers on a sense of elevated morality in comparison with the Western foreigners.

Roman Catholicism is a central feature in local Filipino self-identification as well as in Westerners’ accounts of Filipinos. It is also a central part of public performance of culture. All major festivities, such as a municipal or *barangay* fiestas, begin with a mass and a procession displaying the municipal or *barangay* patron saint. Political gatherings, sports events, and schooldays start with a prayer, vehicles are ornamented with crosses and icons, and many people send text messages with daily prayers and blessings, or post them on Facebook. The homes of Filipinos often have an altar with baby Jesus, and if they have a garden it usually includes a cement grotto with Mother Mary. Roman Catholicism is essential in many Filipinos’ cultural self-identification, and is described as a feature of the ‘real’ and ‘true’ Filipino, again indicating how the Filipino

sense of cultural authenticity is not necessarily sought in the precolonial, in the same manner as tourists' search for authenticity tends to be.

Westerners in Sabang often reject any religious beliefs as irrational or even hypocritical. When I discussed religion with Westerners, and none of those I talked to identified as practicing Catholics, many of them were skeptical about local Filipinos' self-image as having higher moral standards regarding, for example, sex. While Filipinos emphasize female chastity before marriage and marital fidelity, Westerners argue that Filipinos also "mess around," but do not acknowledge it. The issue of Catholic confession was another topic. Kurt was perhaps the most articulate informant on the subject: "Everybody is talking about the Ten Commandments on a daily basis." But, according to Kurt the local Filipinos did not practice what they preached: "They lie, they covet their neighbor's house, they fuck each other's wives, husbands and so on, and so forth. You know, you can just, the whole list on from one to ten, right? But, on Sunday, you go to church and you say: 'Sorry Boss', and that's that. And you are forgiven." He continued in an ironic tone: "Well, this is a wonderful religion, you know, you can do what you like, all you have do is to say you're sorry." Other foreigners were less aggressive than Kurt was in their criticism of Catholicism, but most Westerners I talked to were uninterested in religion themselves, and they shared Kurt's skepticism towards the Filipino emphasis on having "high morality."

From a Filipino perspective, the foreigners' lack of religious affiliation partially explains the expats' lack of family and communal values: they lack proper faith and moral guidelines. The association between foreigners and immorality or inappropriateness is strong in Sabang. When I asked Francesca, an elderly local woman whose family owned a resort, about how she felt about foreigners' culture she answered: "For me, I'm not interested, I'm really conservative (*napaluma*)."¹ The word "conservative" effectively marks a moral boundary between herself and those she considered not to be so. She puts forth notions of morality to emphasize the difference between herself and the Other.

Foreigners are often described by my local Filipino informants as not revering God and lacking proper faith and values, which is reflected in their 'immoral' behavior. Foreigners' lack of morality is also apparent in

their excessive drinking, engaging in commercial sex, going to bed late and waking up late, and the generally 'lazy' life of the tourists. This last point may be understood as throughout the year tourists come to Sabang to relax, and their relaxation is what the Filipinos witness, day in and day out. Local Filipinos were aware that the tourists probably worked hard the rest of the year in order to afford such relaxation, but still, their behavior and consumption (staying at hotels, eating at expensive restaurants, going scuba diving, the nearly constant drinking) would not be possible at all for most Filipinos, no matter how conscientiously they saved their money.

The notion of a process of escalating acculturation is feared by many locals, and it is suspected that tourists' lack of religious beliefs negatively affects the local Filipinos. But Renata makes a clear distinction between insiders and outsiders: "Here in our place, there's no change in the attitudes of the people. It's just those Filipinos who are coming here for work, they have bad attitudes. But those who are really from here, they are nice, and they haven't changed. For example, at night time you can see that the vendors go to the tourists' balconies and maybe their things will be stolen, or the vendors will harm the tourists. But people who come here they see that people here are nice, and that's why even the impertinent people who are come here, they change their attitudes. Yes, because they see that people here are not impertinent. There are lots of bad people coming here but when they come here, they become nice because they see that those who are really from here are not impertinent."

Westerners are not the only ones identified as immoral by local Filipinos. Domestic migrants, such as bar girls and beach vendors, are also called immoral. Bar girls are generally deemed sexually immoral, and they are also associated with other habits and activities interpreted as undesirable for a Philippine woman, such as drinking alcohol and smoking in public, being loud and dressing scantily. Other domestic migrants such as beach vendors were often described as "nuisances" as their behaviors also deviated from the norm by being pushy in their interactions with potential customers. These non-local Filipinos are, as Renata explains, associated with criminal activities, and if something is stolen it is domestic migrants who are the first suspects. Outsiders, foreigners as well as non-local Filipinos are identified as being the sources of negative acculturation, as it is feared that their immoral behavior affects the local population.

When a more general sense of threat to the locals' (in this case the Filipino population of the municipality) good morality and reverence for God was identified as too great, political measures were taken to ensure public morality. In 1999, a Municipal Ordinance (M.O. 1999. No. 145) aimed at "Regulating Social Activities During Maundy Thursdays and Good Fridays." Maundy Thursday is also known as Holy Thursday, and it is celebrated to commemorate the Last Supper of Jesus. In Sabang, as elsewhere in the Philippines the expression Maundy Thursday is commonplace. The idea of the ordinance was to control and regulate activities and behaviors of the public, in particular Filipino outsiders such as domestic tourists. As examples of inappropriate activities, the Municipal Ordinance mentions concerts and gay beauty pageants. The ordinance sends a strong signal of a sense of public behavior and morality as spiraling out of control, and represents an attempt to take control over the situation and to protect the moral reputation of the municipality, which is continuously perceived to be under threat, not least through Sabang's bar scene. It should be noted that the ordinance primarily targeted Filipino behavior. Social activities such as concerts and gay pageants are not a part of foreigners' tourism entertainment scene, and these activities take place in another *barangay*, at White Beach, visited to a greater extent by domestic tourists than by foreign ones.

It is thus not only foreign tourists who are targeted and identified as behaving inappropriately, but also non-local Filipinos. Foreign tourists are not expected to change their behavior during Holy Week, but domestic tourists are, and to signal this, a municipal ordinance was passed. The objective of the ordinance was to secure the morality and reputation of the municipality and to protect its inhabitants from exposure to immoral behavior by regulating the behavior of Filipino tourists, who are expected to share the same values and morals as the local Filipino populations. In effect, this was an act of self-preservation but also one of self-identification.

Local Filipinos are represented as 'having culture' in the sense of proper moral, family, and social values. By emphasizing one's own core values, such as family values, collective focus, Catholicism, and morality, people respond to what they perceive as a threat to cultural and moral integrity. Narratives of difference are strategically used by Filipinos to

maintain a sense of cultural continuity and integrity. In local story-telling, the source of loss of morality and thus loss of culture is placed outside the local insider sphere (see also Wiss 2005). A hierarchy of morality is thus not only constructed between the larger categories of hosts and guests, colonized and the colonizers, East and West, but also among Filipinos. Moral superiority is claimed by a specific privileged group – the Filipino locals. Great changes during a relatively short period of time may have stirred up concern in people's definition of self, and the construction of the other offers a relatively stable way of viewing oneself and one's interactions with people from all over the world. The boundary-making between insiders and outsiders may contribute to the maintaining of a sense of sameness within the groups. The notions of differences are upheld in order to preserve one's own self-image, values, and morality.

Concluding Remarks

In Sabang complex cross-cultural negotiations of images of the Other are undertaken on a daily basis in the interface between Filipinos and foreigners. There are commonalities in Filipino and Western constructions of the Other, a sense of agreement in notions such as 'Filipinos avoid public conflicts' and 'Westerners are confrontational,' or that 'Filipinos risk losing their sense of culture and becoming commercialized through tourism.' People in Sabang have become accustomed to living with these constructions of difference, which have become a part of their daily interactions with each other.

Most of my informants agree to disagree, so to speak, especially when it comes to how to handle disagreements. Cultural differences are thus maintained, and there is an interest in perpetuating stereotypical images. My informants seek to anchor their own cultural identities and desires in the face of palpable changes brought on by tourism development. Boundaries between 'us' and 'them' are maintained to emphasize differences. These differences are essential in tourism imagery in the production of tourism. They are also locally significant in that they function to explain discrepancies in wealth, race, and behavior as well as facilitate the maintaining of a self-image as morally and ethically sound. The notions of differences are

maintained in order to protect a self-identification as ensuring a certain morality. The boundaries are emphasized to maintain one's own self-image, values, and morality. Through these distinctions people also create and maintain a sense of sameness within the groups.

Great changes over a relatively short period of time may have stirred up concern in one's definition of self, and the construction of the other offers a relatively stable way of viewing oneself and one's interactions with people from all over the world. During this relatively short period of time of tourism development, commercial sex has also become an everyday feature of life in Sabang. Commercial sex is considered, primarily by Filipinos, highly immoral, and the women who work in the business are constructed as the ultimate outsiders and as deviants from Filipino cultural norms regarding womanhood. Foreigners' strange (and immoral) behavior is often accredited to their 'foreignness,' but the Filipina sex workers are not met with the same leniency. The following two chapters will discuss sex workers' lives and work strategies as well as how they are viewed by the local community.

4. Bar Girls and Bar Work

Introduction

Among the local Filipinos, the bar girls often come to symbolize the ultimate deviant from Catholic norms and beliefs. Women working in the bar scenes deal with issues of identity, agency, control, morality, race, and gender and other intersections of social hierarchies in complex ways that are more intimately connected to local setting and express local practices. This is something all people do, but in the case of women working in commercial sex in Sabang they more specifically have to deal with stereotypes, stigma, and narrow views of themselves as persons, of their work and their status as moral/immoral women.

The ethnographic focus of this chapter is on the local organization of commercial sex and the bar girls' narratives and experiences, inside and outside the go-go bars. How do bar girls employed in Sabang's go-go bars negotiate their own identities, autonomy, and agency in a context of negative stereotyping? Of particular interest are the women's efforts to maintain a sense of self-worth and agency within a wider socio-cultural context that condemns commercial sex and the women engaged in it as immoral and inappropriate – something which the bar girls resist.

When talking to bar girls about their experiences and following their lives within and outside the go-go bars of Sabang, the common approach in scholarly work of bar girls as either victims or agents is not applicable without some reconsideration and added nuance. Furthermore, both approaches fail to capture the finer significant details of local practices, and both have a tendency to overemphasize totalizing identities. In order to capture these lines of thoughts, I turn to the experiences of the bar girls' bar work in Sabang.

Rose

Rose will provide a central voice in this chapter, so a more extensive presentation of how I met her is in order. She was the woman working in a go-go bar I got to know the best. Her account of her life is also typical for women in Sabang's sex industry, one that in large parts echoes those told to me by other women in the bar world.

I first met Rose through Tiffany, one of her co-workers. Tiffany had seen me in the Sunset Disco and had approached me, curious about my presence there. Tiffany had nicknamed me "Tagalog," since she was amazed at my ability to speak a little of the language, a fact which also made Rose interested in making my acquaintance. Tagalog was not the native tongue of either Rose (who spoke Bicolano) or Tiffany (who spoke Cebuano), but, like most Filipinos, the two of them also knew Tagalog. Rose and I started talking, and I found her to be vivacious and funny. There was also a serious side to Rose, and in our conversations she took her time to find the right words to express her sentiments and opinions, not always an easy task with our somewhat limited grasp of Tagalog and English respectively.

At our first meeting Rose invited me to come and see her at the Sunset Disco the following night. I accepted the invitation and I continued to go and see Rose, Tiffany, and their colleagues almost every night for three months. Rose and I would sit down and talk whenever she had the opportunity, as long as it didn't interfere with her work. Go-go bars are loud places; music is playing, and it's difficult to carry out a conversation. It's not a suitable place for intimate talks. Nevertheless, as time went on, Rose and I got to know one another, and it was primarily through Rose I learned the finer details of the goings on in the bar, who was related to whom, what the bar girls thought about their work and their customers.

When I returned to Sabang a year after we had said our goodbyes, Rose had stopped working at the Sunset Disco. We had exchanged contact information, but as Rose could barely write we had lost touch while I was in Sweden. Upon my return a year later, almost all of our mutual acquaintances had left Sabang, and the ones still there didn't know what had happened to Rose. It was typical for women in the bar world to drift

in an out of sex work, and no one seemed preoccupied with the fact that Rose had left them without notice.

The Business of the Night: Ladies' Drinks and Bar Fines

In Sabang commercial sex is hard to miss if you're walking through the central areas of the *barangay* during the nighttime, where the six go-go bars are located. During a three-month period in the mid-2000 I spent most of my evenings at Sunset Disco, where Rose and Tiffany worked. After these months I went in just to check things out, go look for someone I knew, or accompanying someone who for one reason or another wanted company. In Sunset Disco I talked to Rose, her co-workers, and the customers there. I did not do any recorded interviews with a bar girl. The topic of their pasts and their work was sensitive, and I had the impression that they preferred to talk about it in more casual conversations. The ones I got to know a little better also met up with me during the daytime. Approximately 30-40 bar girls worked at Sunset Disco, and I got to talk to about half of them during the time of my most intense period of fieldwork in the go-go bars. With some I only had a quick chat, but I had repeated conversations with others. The *mamasans* (managers) usually stayed clear of me, for reasons unknown to me; I only learned about them from the bar girls. Perhaps they saw me as an unwanted presence in the go-go bar. Also, the *mamasans* generally did not entertain customers. During that time, it was only women who worked as *mamasans* in the go-go bars in Sabang. Men could be employed for the same duties, but were then called *papasan*. The *mamasans* were in charge of managing the bar girls, in particular mediating any negotiations between a customer and a bar girl, keeping track of the bar girls, and functioning as the bar girls' primary person to contact if they experienced any problem in line of their work or to discuss any issue the bar girl wanted to air. Nevertheless, my key informants were a small group of six women, including Tiffany and Rose, and a freelancer named Linda. During later periods of fieldwork, I continued to visit the Sunset Disco and the other go-go bars in Sabang, but not as frequently as previously. I also met bar girls in the company of their customers outside

the go-go bar and talked to them. Sabang is a small place, and it is almost inevitable to bump into people you know; the business of commercial sex is not confined to go-go bars but is noticeable throughout Sabang, and it was a also topic of numerous of my conversations I had with people there throughout my stays in Sabang.

In the nighttime, Sabang is a “sexscape,” a term I borrow from anthropologist Denise Brennan (2004a). Brennan examines the lives and actions of women in commercial sex in a tourism town in Dominican Republic. In her understanding of women involved in sex tourism, she sees their lives as profoundly shaped by flows of people, money, as well as imageries of sex, race, bodies, and gender intrinsically linked with globalization.¹ Brennan defines sexscapes as: “Within sexscapes, the sex trade becomes a focal point of a place, and the social and economic relations of that place are filtered through the nightly (and daily) selling of sex to foreigners” (Brennan 2004a: 16). She points out that: “Sexscapes link the practices of sex work to the forces of a globalized economy. Their defining characteristics are (1) international travel from the developed to the developing world, (2) consumption of paid sex, and (3) inequality” (Brennan 2004a: 16). The latter refers to inequality between the providers and consumers of commercial sex not only in terms of money but also power. Furthermore, in Brennan’s understanding of sexscapes, economic dependency is of central concern, and it is primarily sex tourist destinations in poorer countries that become sexscapes. Cities such as Amsterdam, Frankfurt, or New York may have their red-light-districts, but the women in general, or the city or country *as such* do not become intimately associated with their sexual availability or commercial sex in general to the extent as for example Thailand, the Philippines, or the Dominican Republic have become (Altman 2001: 11). In Sabang, a division between insiders and outsiders is furthermore central (Wiss 2005). Local women are not allowed to take up sex work, and local men have only restricted access to the go-go bars.² The

1 Brennan builds her understanding of sex tourism on conceptualizations of global “scapes,” introduced by Arjun Appadurai (1996), and in particular the notion of “sexscapes” (Brennan 2004a; 2004b), where “Sex-for-sale is one more dimension of global cultural flows, and Sosúa is one site within a global economy of commercialized sexual transactions” (Brennan 2004b, note 7, p. 728).

2 Local men also pay for sex, but do so either in other *barangays* or have off-the-record deals with bar girls or hunting girls (or freelancers).

sexscape is in essence an arena for women from other parts of the country and foreign men. If local men wish to pay for sex they do so either outside Sabang or outside the official local sex scene, through private channels.

The bar girls are hired by the go-go bars to entertain the customers through socializing, mainly chit-chatting and attending to their needs and wishes. The bar girls are expected to report to work every night when the bar opens, usually at 7 pm. Bar girls dance on the stage for three songs two to three times a night and there are generally three dancers on stage at any time. The Sunset Disco was built like a theater, where the stage with three dancing poles was at the bottom of the room, and the benches and stools faced the dance floor, where each row was higher than the one in front of it. It was designed so that you could see the dance floor from wherever you sat in the room.

The music mainly consists of slow rock ballads and pop songs such as the Danish group Aqua's hit *Barbie Girl* or Lady Gaga's *Poker Face*. Bar girls' dancing rarely involves any complex movement. The dancers do not strip, and nudity is not allowed. The common images of go-go bars seen on television shows depicting advanced physical agility do not apply to the general dance and striptease moves of the bar girls in Philippine go-go bars. Most of the time the dancers look awkward, distant, drugged, or bored. To me, at least, a majority of the dances in Sabang's go-go bars usually came across as fairly straightforward 'international sexy': women in bikinis and high heeled boots slinking their bodies around a dancing pole.

Bar girls make their earnings through 'ladies' drinks,' 'bar fines,' and the payment received for sexual acts. The system of ladies' drinks, common throughout the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries, ensures that the customers receive attention and service whenever they enter a go-go bar. A ladies' drink is a drink, beer, or soft-drink depending on what the bar girl wishes, which the customer may offer the bar girl or girls of choice. If a customer buys a bar girl a ladies' drink she is expected to keep the customer company for the duration of the time it takes for them to finish their drinks. The ladies' drinks command a higher price than an ordinary customer's drink. The price of a customer's beer in a go-go bar was about 100 pesos (USD 2) while a ladies' drinks costs approximately twice as much. The prices vary according to the drink, and the bar girl receives a percentage of the drink's price. This way a customer can ensure

the continued attention of a bar girl (or several) for as long he wishes, and for the bar girl to earn a few pesos. Since there is a competition among the women for the income these drinks generate and the means of getting in touch with a potential customer, a customer in go-go bars is rarely without company for more than a few minutes. Furthermore, the ladies' drink is also a way to talk to a potential customer without having to commit to one and the same customer the whole evening. The ladies' drink gives the bar girl an opportunity to get idea of what the customer is like before engaging in him any further, and she can decline any further offers from a customer. It thus acts as a form of protection from potentially aggressive or unstable customers. In such way, a space of negotiation and safety is created.

If the customer wishes to take a bar girl 'out of the bar,' as it is called, he arranges with one of the bar's *mamasans* and pays the woman's 'bar fine.' The bar fine is the payment required in order to release the woman from her bar work duties. Once the bar fine is paid, the bar girl usually stays with the customer for the whole night, if the customer so wishes. The system of bar fines means that the go-go bars themselves do not officially charge for sex. They only charge for company, entertainment, and providing a place for bar girls and customers to meet. The payment for sex is an issue handled by the customer and the bar girl outside the bar. The bar fines in Sabang is usually set at 1 500 pesos (USD 30), and the bar girl receives a share, commonly half. In the mid-2000s, a bar girl could earn somewhere around 2 000 pesos a night, depending on how much the tourists would pay. They could thus make substantial earnings in a short period of time. During the same time period, a high school teacher earned approximately 11 000 a month. Taking on only a few customers could thus mean earning more than a college-educated teacher does in a month. The price of sex was not generally fixed, and some of the bar girls I talked to told me they found it embarrassing to be upfront with a price. This seemed to be problematic for the customers as well, and on a couple of occasions I was asked what I thought was a reasonable price for sex.³ This indeterminacy regarding payment reflects a more general pattern in Sabang's sex tour-

³ There are also webpages where bar girls and prices are discussed, such as at www.philippines-addicts.com (Philippine Addicts 2016), www.internationalsexguide.info (International Sex Guide 2016), or www.worldsexguide.com (World Sex Guide 2016).

ism: to keep it as little commercialized as possible, but still make a profit from it.

Regarding the bar fine, deals can be made between the customer and the *mamasan* if the customer has special requests, such as wanting two or several bar girls, or wishes to arrange for a more long-term deal, for a weekly or monthly bar fine. The bar girl then usually takes on a role similar to that of a girlfriend, an issue I will return to later on. The *mamasan* knows her employees and sometimes the negotiations made in the bar regard sex specifically, such as which girls agree to anal sex, if there is a 'Cherry girl,' a virgin, (something that I did not observe, but was told about) or other requests regarding sex. The prices of bar fines and the payment expected by the bar girls were brought up by several tourists I talked to. They pointed out that the bar fines and price for sex were higher in Sabang compared to those in Angeles, and although they found Sabang to be a nicer place to stay at than Angeles, it was more expensive in terms of costs of living and commercial sex.

Bar girls often pointed out to me that their incomes were irregular, depending on the uneven flow of customers. Like many other tourism towns, Sabang has a peak and an off season (peak season runs from November to April), but with spikes during Christmas and New Year's Eve, as well as Chinese New Year and Easter. During off season, some bar girls take a break from work and go to their home communities, and some move to Angeles. Some stay in Sabang, hoping that enough tourists will arrive for them to make an income anyway. The go-go bars are visited throughout the year, but in off season they are frequented by a lower number of tourists than during peak season. Furthermore, far from all bar girls are bar fined every night, and a bar girl may go weeks without having a customer. The bar girls also said that the work itself demanded investments such as make-up and dresses in order to attract customers, not to mention the drugs and alcohol they wanted or needed to consume. Many bar girls told me that they felt the need to have a drink or two in order to have the courage to be, what they said; 'aggressive,' to approach customers directly and in a manner they would normally not approach people they didn't know well.

At times I would run into Rose and the customer who had bar fined her. After being bar fined, Rose rarely drank any more alcohol if she could

choose not to. This was rather unusual among bar girls. After Rose had been bar fined she attended to the wishes of the customers, and insisted on pouring the coffee, adding milk and sugar and stirring, for her customer, in accordance to her perception of taking care of somebody. She also ordered the kind of beer or food he wished, and in other ways acting as the communication link between him and the waitresses, by ordering the menu, asking for the bill, and watching out for any inconsistencies in the bill (all in Tagalog). She said to me that she wanted to take care her customer, and her customers generally seemed to enjoy the pampering.

It was important for Rose and her colleagues to make a good impression on their customers. The go-go bars in Sabang have a 'no complaints-policy,' meaning that the bar girl is immediately dismissed if she receives a formal complaint addressed to the *mamasan* from a customer. This policy was a source of stress for the bar girls. For example, one night Tiffany had gotten very drunk and lost track of the customer who had bar fined her. She was very distraught, not only because she had squandered an opportunity to make some money or the fact that the customer had stolen her purse containing her essential documents and cell phone. Her main concern was that the customer would file a complaint. That would mean that she would lose her job and source of income. The customer did indeed complain to the *mamasan*, but he agreed to withdraw the complaint and return Tiffany's purse if she would be repay the bar fine he had paid. Tiffany eventually scraped up the sum and ultimately got to keep her job. But the 'no complaints' policy puts demands on the bar girls; they have to behave and act in a way not to offend or in any way discourage or disappoint their clients.

Rose lived in a small room on top of the Sunset Disco, in a dorm where most of her co-workers also lived. She had a room for her own, while most of her colleagues shared accommodations with someone. Other go-go bars commonly rent houses for the bar girls, and they live together with their colleagues, if they haven't found a boyfriend who could finance a more private and what was thought to be a better living arrangement. The bar girls' accommodations were not generally used for sex, as they were often shared with others. In a tourism town such as Sabang, the matter of the place where the actual sex would take place is not generally

an issue: the customers have their hotel rooms. A few establishments offer rooms for rent by the hour, but that is not the norm.

Pink Slips: Making the Illegal Almost Legal

Sabang's commercial sex is organized in a different manner than in many international red light districts, where sex workers charge for specific sexual acts or for a determined period of time. Instead it is organized in such a way that downplays the commercial aspect. It can be understood as "open-ended," an expression introduced in Asian sex tourism research by the sociologist Erik Cohen (1996). The encounters between the bar girl and the tourist may take the form of shorter or longer relationships. Or, in other words, the encounters between bar girls and tourists are not clearly commercialized, but rather 'fuzzy,' or with gray areas. The local sexscape builds on the allure of intimacy, rather than strict payment for sex. This is locally institutionalized, and the go-go bars are regulated by municipal rules and ordinances that set the parameters for commercial sex in Sabang.

The interactions between bar girls and customers are not limited to sex. The bar girls act as tour guides, translators, masseuses, and culture brokers, as they introduce the tourists to Philippine society, culture, and language. The bar girls accompany their customers to other bars and restaurants, on tours and excursions, or to swim and relax at the beach. At times the customers take them on their travels around the country or abroad. Furthermore, some bar girls also told me that through their work they got to practice speaking English, which they saw as an investment for the future. Indeed, the bar girls generally viewed bar work as an advancement strategy (Brennan 2004a; Lindquist 2009: 78), where not only potential marriage with a foreign man was a goal, but that through their work they could also gain desirable experience and skills.

Prostitution is formally illegal in the Philippines. Republic Act No. 10364 (2013) defines prostitution as: "any act, transaction, scheme or design involving the use of a person by another, for sexual intercourse or lascivious conduct in exchange for money, profit or any other consideration." In the Republic Act several acts of prostitution are defined and

identified as illegal, such as trafficking, hiring someone for the purpose of prostitution, and child prostitution. While prostitution is nationally illegal, it is simultaneously sanctioned, regulated, and monitored by the municipal authorities. This is a paradox, but one that is widely applied throughout the Philippines (Law 2000; Ratliff 2003; Wiss 2005). The municipalities are responsible for providing the various businesses with permits to operate within that specific community. The go-go bars in Sabang are also required to meet the local requirements for operating and to fulfill the local municipal rules regulations for conducting business. The go-go bars both protect the bar girls as they are sanctioned by the local government, but make them also vulnerable since the go-go bars can be raided by the police. Whenever this happens it is foremost the bar girls and the *mama-sans* the police are after; the customers are not targeted. In Sabang raids are rare. None of my informants had experienced one, and they were not overly worried about the prospect of one occurring (for a comparison, see Wiss 2005: 257).

The go-go bars themselves do not explicitly offer commercial sex, only the venue for customers and bar girls to meet. As noted earlier, the payment for sex is handled between the bar girl and the customer. However, women working in the go-go bars who can be bar fined must be duly registered as Entertainer, Guest Relation Officers (GROs) or Commercial Sex Worker (CSWs). The latter is a term that the then Chief of Medicine Hubbert Dolor introduced to the local record keeping of bar girls in the late 2000s, though the term bar girl is the most common term used in Sabang. To be able to work, a bar girl needs to receive a special health clearance from the local government, a so-called "Pink Slip." Aside from the generally required birth certificate, *barangay* clearance, and police clearance, which is demanded of all employees in the municipality, bar girls also have to provide certificates of being free of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV. In the event of a positive test for an STD or HIV, the woman's Pink Slip is withdrawn until she has tested negative, which means that she can't officially be working as a bar girl until she is declared healthy again. Although local regulations require these regular health examinations of bar girls, they are in reality rarely implemented. The check-ups are irregular at best, and there may be several months between them. The Pink Slips may give the customer the impression of false security, that the

bar girl has been cleared recently and thus safe to have sex with without a condom. The use of condoms was not an easy subject to talk about, either for the bar girls or their customers, but, in the conversations I did have, the bar girls reported irregular use of condoms and said that they often adjusted to their customers' wishes. The men said that they ideally would use condoms, but were vague on the subject. However, condoms can easily be found in Sabang. They are sold at convenience stores, at pubs, and in hotel rooms. Condoms are obtainable throughout urban areas of the Philippines, but in Sabang they are more readily available than normally in the country.

The practice of monitoring and regularly testing women working in go-go bars for STDs is common throughout the country and was reportedly first introduced under Spanish colonial rule. It became common during the time of the American military bases, in an attempt to control the spread of STDs among American servicemen (Ofreneo & Ofreneo 1998: 100; Ratliff 1999: 81). The testing of bar-working women can also be understood as an expression of a more general attitude towards women in commercial sex. They are seen as a threat to the general population, and they are perceived as a risk group who must be monitored in order not to contaminate the general population (Law 1998; Ratliff 1999: 81).

Negotiating Identities

The sexscape in Sabang is loaded with values, and designations and identifications might be strategically used in order to mark one's position in the local moral hierarchy. This became apparent to me during a breakfast I had with Rose and Wena.

One morning on the way to the restaurant where I was meeting Rose for breakfast, I ran into Wena. Wena was not a resident in Sabang but every now and then spent a couple of weeks there to, as she put it, "relax and maybe meet a foreigner." She was in contact with a German man whom she referred to as her boyfriend, though she hadn't seen him in three years. I invited Wena to join us for breakfast, and it was the first time she and Rose had met. When Wena started asking questions about Rose's work, Rose looked uncomfortable and answered the questions quickly and in

a low voice. When Wena found out that Rose was working as a bar girl, she told a story about what had happened to her a few nights previously. She had been sitting in a pub when a man, a tourist from Germany, had offered her 200 pesos (USD 4) to keep him company that evening. Wena expressed her reaction to this offer by forming her face to express surprise and indignation, and saying: “No, no,” waving her hands. Wena started laughing and ridiculed the man who had made her the offer. “What did he think! He thought I was a GRO or something! No, no, I’m not like that. I’m not a prostitute. Can you believe it? He offered me 200 pesos, like I was a prostitute or something.” Rose looked down, quiet, and I changed the subject.

In her ridiculing of the idea of her being a “prostitute or something,” Wena also marked herself as different from Rose. Women in Sabang often identified as precisely different from bar girls. Issues of identities and identifications for women in Sabang were problematic, and tied to sexual morality. In other instances, behaving in such a way as Wena did, going out to pubs visited by foreign men on her own would be something that would be frowned upon. However, Wena was an outsider and not under the intensive scrutiny that local women would be. But she still found it important to make it clear that Rose and I did not mistake her for a bar girl, even though she must have seen that it made Rose uncomfortable.

Aside from being called ‘bar girls’ or ‘GROs,’ they are also called *puta* or *pokpok*, or ‘prostitutes.’ In local official records, as I have already mentioned, they are recorded as Entertainers, Commercial Sex Workers or as GROs. The label Commercial Sex Worker is a terminology not adopted in everyday speech. The terms ‘prostitute’ and ‘prostitution’ are heavily laden with moral stigma, and are avoided by the bar girls. They tend to refer to themselves as ‘working in a bar,’ ‘bar girl,’ ‘entertainer,’ or ‘GRO.’ This use of varying terms in self-designation may reflect a self-identification that can encompass a wider range of services they offered, being a friend, short or potentially long-time girlfriend, or companion (Law 2000; Ratliff 1999; Wiss 2011: 13). Wiss reflects on the difficulties involved when adopting a particular terminology of her informants working in the bars of Sabang: “CSW is a designation that marks my uneasy and partial alliance with the pro-sex worker rights movement and its refutation of the moral stigma of the word prostitute. However, bar-girls would refute this as their singular,

stabilising, possibly professionalising, yet still stigmatising identity” (Wiss 2011: 13).

I feel similar uneasiness in needing to choose one term in writing, one particular label for the women working in the go-go bars in Sabang, but I realize it is needed for the sake of clarity.⁴ However, adopting the term most frequently used, by both the women themselves and others, ‘bar girl,’ I risk infantilizing them, while many of the women I got to know were adults and mothers themselves (Wiss 2011: 13). Rose was 26 and older than most of her colleagues, who called her *Ate* (older sister). She was also a mother of two. That is not to claim that all the bar girls working in the bars were adults. I was told by Rose and her colleagues about which ones at the Sunset Disco were under 18 but had managed to be employed by means of fake identification, thus circumventing the official policy of not employing women under 18 as a bar girl. I also spoke to several bar girls that I thought seemed young, and their immediate answer to my questions of their age was that they were 18. In these instances the answer seemed contrived, but I can only speculate as I was not able to press the issue further.

I have chosen not to use the stigmatized label ‘prostitution’ but the term ‘commercial sex’ instead. By this I wish to avoid the negative historical and moral connotations prostitution brings. My informants working within the sexscape certainly avoided the terms ‘prostitution’ and ‘prostitute’ because of their association with immorality. Their choice of designation is one way they resist and negotiate the stigma attached to them. Similarly, bar girls tend to use other designations than ‘customer’ or ‘sex tourist’ but call the men ‘boyfriend’ instead (see also Cohen 1996: 256, 271; Ratliff 1999: 90f). The term ‘boyfriend’ is used by bar girls also for their short-term customers. Rose would for example call the man who had bar fined her boyfriend, although she knew it was only for one night.

One could argue that the use of terms such as bar girl or boyfriend are euphemisms, but these terms could also be seen as expressing an ambiguity, reflecting the openness in regards to defining relationships formed in these contexts. This also signals that the system as such allows for flexibility on behalf of identities and that one does not have to choose between being either a professional sex worker or a victimized prostitute,

⁴ On this ambivalence in regards to designations, see also Gregory (2007: 134, 161).

to the degree that the discourse on prostitution/sex work would have it (Barry 1995; Dworkin 1987; GAATW 1997; Network of Sex Work Projects 1997; Pheterson 1996; Phillip & Dunn 1998). The use of concepts such as 'bar girl' and 'boyfriend' might also express how universalizing labels such as 'prostitute' and 'sex buyer' are resisted and transformed into categories that are more in accordance with local perceptions of love, sexuality, exchange, and gender. Terms like bar girls, girlfriend and boyfriend are intrinsically linked to how commercial sex is constructed in Sabang: open to gray areas, open-endedness, and indeterminacy in regards to where the encounter could possibly lead (Cohen 1996). The anthropologist Ara Wilson (2004) turns to the concepts of "intimate economies" and "commercial intimacy" when trying to capture the avoidance of making distinctions between commercial and emotional relationship in the go-go bars of Bangkok. This is also avoided in Sabang. The different terms, such as 'boyfriend' and 'girlfriend' point to a wish to downplay what many of the actors on the local sexscape view as undesirable: being involved in something blatantly commercialized as suggested by their image of how commercial sex works in the West.

Although lines may be blurred in Sabang's sexscape, Rose frequently returned to the subject of the difficulties with her job. She said: "Sometimes I cry. I don't want to go with a different man every night. I still have a heart. But it is my job; I have to do it in order to support my children." I heard several bar girls express themselves in a similar fashion, saying that they cried when considering their lives. What seemed of be of great importance to women I spoke to was to make it clear to me that they are not 'plastic.' Their hearts are not fake; they are individuals with sincere feelings, morals, and expectations in life. It took Rose quite some time to accept that I didn't look down on her for her work, and she often talked about how she felt that other women, and men, outside the go-go bar looked at her derogatively. "I know what I am, but I'm not less worth", Rose would often say. To herself she was indeed a bar girl, but only while she worked. Rose, like many other bar girls I talked to, had not told her family and friends back home how she supported herself. One's work doesn't necessarily define one's own self-identification, and in this case the work itself can also be seen as varied and often not restricted to sex.

Most women often only live and work in go-go bars for a brief pe-

riod of their lives, some for a few months, others for a couple of years, some for more. Some manage to marry a foreigner – the ultimate goal for many bar girls. Bar girls often spend long periods of time away from the go-go bars, in particular if they can get financial support from foreign boyfriends. When these relationships end, they return to their work in the go-go bars. Bar girls tend to oscillate between the bars and the world outside them (see also Brennan 2004a: Law 2000: Wiss 2005).

Life of Women in Sabang's Sexscape

Most bar girls were hesitant to tell to me about the details to how they came to work in the go-go bars. A majority of the bar girls I talked to told me histories of poverty, motherhood, abuse, and abandonment. The bar girls told me that they were from poor areas of Manila, from Cebu, Bicol, Samar, or Mindoro's neighboring province Batangas; none of them were from Sabang. Local girls were, in fact, not permitted by the municipal authority to work as bar girls in order to protect the honor of local families, and they rarely have the economic need to do so. Local girls also have opportunities to meet foreign men in other circumstances than through bar work, such as through mutual acquaintances or through their work in the family business. Some had started out working as waitresses and then proceeded to take up work as bar girls, seeing that the potential earnings were much greater. Some, like Rose, said that they first learned about the work through a friend, or a friend's foreign boyfriend. Some had already worked in go-go bars before trying their luck in Sabang, while others had not. Some of those who had experiences of go-go bars had arrived as a part of group with a *mamasan*, following her when she relocated her business there, and some had chosen come to Sabang on their own. The main reason to seek work in Sabang was the allure of foreign customers who not only offered opportunities of making more money but also of perhaps meeting and marrying a wealthy man.

Rose initially introduced herself to me as Mychelle, which was the stage name a *mamasan* had given her. It wasn't until later that she told me her Christian name. "I don't know why she gave me that name, but maybe it's because we're supposed to be professionals, like not being myself."

Rose told me that she had adapted to that way of thinking of herself and explained: “I’m Rose, Mychelle is the one working.” The use of stage names is a strategy by the bars (or more specifically the *mamasans*) to imbue the bar girls with a professional attitude towards their work. Rose told me that the *mamasans* taught them to create a boundary between their professional and personal identities. A part of this division was to adopt a professional name. The ‘real’ names of the bar girls were known by co-workers and more steady boyfriends, and were subjects of negotiation: for the customers, learning a woman’s real name expressed a more intimate relationship. The bar girls used this and sometimes invented a ‘real’ name for the customer to encourage him to believe their relationship was close.

Several bar girls told me that it had taken some time to get used to their work. They referred not only to being paid for sex but also encompassing a new way to dress, drink, and be socially outgoing, or in general getting used to the party life that their work required them to partake in. Law, who writes about sex workers in the Philippines, argues that: “Dancers [bar girls] re-learn their bodies in new and often revolutionary ways during their employment in the sex industry, and this is often equated with ‘becoming modern’” (1997b: 11). Indeed, in Sabang the bar girls, more often than the non-bar girls, drink alcohol, talk loudly, take drugs, smoke cigarettes, and dress revealingly (for example dress like some female tourists who walk around Sabang in a bikini top and a sarong and swim without a t-shirt to cover them). These are all actions associated with the less strict and more liberated and modern West. Bar girls also get tattoos, something few local Filipinas outside the sexscape do. This may be a form of empowerment for these bar girls, to take charge of images of the West and appropriate them into a new gender role for women, that of an outspoken woman who behaves in a manner few other local Filipinas would want or dare to do. But diverging from conventional social norms has its cost; they are easily identified as bar girls and face the stigma associated with that profession.⁵

Once when I was interviewing two Filipino men we started talking about the bar girls. One of the men said: “You can see the difference

⁵ The bar girls also develop transnational connections through their interactions with foreigners and staying in touch with them through text messaging, e-mail, and Facebook (see Gregory 2007: 161).

between the prostitute and the decent Filipina by the way they dress and the manners of how they speak.” When I asked about the difference he answered: “They’re [non-bar girls] more...maybe you will notice that they are simpler and then they are not loud when they are speaking. They [bar girls] are not very demure, and even in the way they [women] put on make-up, you know, from painting their faces alone you will notice how different these prostitutes are [from non-bar girls]. Then it’s the way they [bar girls] dress, sometimes the cleavages are shown. But the educated woman is completely different...you know... Maybe you will not notice it but the three of us [the two informants and my male assistant] we know right away. Even if they don’t speak.” The behaviors of bar girls mark them as different from other Filipinas and confirm their outsider status.

In provincial Sabang, these forms of femininity are still associated with immorality. Marriage could be a possible way to restore their claim to authentic womanhood, which is also often stated as an ultimate goal by bar girls. However, due to their work history, bar girls said to me that their possibilities of finding a Filipino partner who would accept their history as a bar girl were slim. Male foreigners were, on the other hand, perceived as more probably marriage partners as they were seen as less concerned about virginity and more open-minded regarding sexual morality. In regards to becoming modern, Wiss (2005: 49) also notes that the bar is spaces that holds a certain inherent contradiction. It is a space where the men see themselves as traditional, having conventional values regarding gender roles where male sexuality is directed outwards and seeking more Asian traditional women than the ‘liberated’ Western woman (Burton 1997). At the same time a space where the bar girls associate themselves with the modern, with more liberal views of sexuality.

For many of the bar girls the process of acquiring and embodying features of their perceptions of the modern and international is not easy. “I was too shy in the beginning. I didn’t know how to dance,” Rose told me. At first she had been reluctant to dance on the stage, but the *mamasan* had encouraged her do it, arguing it was a part of the job. When I got to know Rose, she had been working at the Sunset Disco for about a year, and she had gotten used to dancing, but she was still visibly insecure on stage. When it was her turn to dance, she always did so in the company of two other women; she was not a ‘Star Dancer’ – women who can execute

special moves such as dramatic splits or can climb the poles exceptionally well and usually dance solo. Rose said that she was too shy to move like that. She had not been able to let go of her conservative ideals of womanhood in respect of how to move her body in public.



Bar girls at work at a go-go bar.

At times I would run into Rose in the mornings, when I was about to go to see an informant or go on an errand and when she was leaving a customer. When this happened, she almost always smiled weakly, pointed at her clothes and said: “Sorry for this, you know...”, and later on she would say that it was embarrassing having met me when she “was like that.” Rose, like many other bar girls at the Sunset Disco had three different wardrobes: one for dancing, one for work offstage and one to use in private, outside work. The clothes for dancing were the skimpiest ones, often consisting of bikinis or short and sexy-looking tops worn with short pants or skirts and high-heeled boots. After dancing Rose always went to a small room beside the stage to change to clothes that covered more of her body, to tight-fitting pants or jeans and a fancier top or blouse. The clothes Rose wore in private were pants and a t-shirt, and less exposing in character, less tight, and not made of glittery and shining material, than her offstage working clothes often were. When she came from having spent a night with a customer she was still in these offstage clothes, and she was well aware that they clearly signaled her profession. And indeed, on many occasions I heard comments and gossiping from tourists and local Filipinos about bar girls walking back to their home in the morning, dressed for a night out.

Rose's concern for how I viewed her shows how problematic it was for her to oscillate between being a professional and a private person, and how her professionalism could not always carry on over to situations such as her walking home in the morning: she was well aware of the judgmental looks and comments she received, and she was afraid that I might judge her in the same way. The bar girls negotiate several boundaries, most acutely boundaries of gender, race, sexuality, and morality. These issues were present in most of their daily and nightly activities. The community set strict parameters of morality, and Rose and her co-workers navigated their lives according to this the best way they could. Moreover, in a small town such as Sabang bar girls like Rose are known, and they aren't easily accepted as one of the other locals, and in Sabang Rose's possibilities of creating a non-bar work identity were practically non-existent. For Rose, Sabang was just a place for work. She often described Sabang as a morally decadent place and a place filled with drugs and alcohol, and she often commented that she would never dream of moving there with her children. This statement can be an expression of a general view of Sabang as a decadent place; it is a shared discourse between Filipinos and foreigners. Rose tried to separate her life in Sabang from that in Manila, where she had a home. There her two sons were living with their caretaker, and she went to visit them every month or so. She told me she had kept her work secret from them. By acknowledging the generally held notion of Sabang as immoral and unsuitable for children, Rose made a distinction between her values as a mother and as a bar girl doing business – a business that she said she had entered because of motherhood when her husband had abandoned her and their two sons.

Even though the bar girls frequently told me they do not imagine themselves continuing with commercial sex, the go-go bars are familiar environments. As a bar girl ages, and no longer attracts customers, the bars still offer opportunities of employment, as managers, or as *mamasans* (the *mamasans* are commonly former bar girls), caretakers for the children of other bar girls, waitresses or other ways to support themselves through auxiliary businesses in make-up, sewing work dresses, and so forth. However, staying within the sexscape is not always an option, partly because there are fewer job opportunities than former bar girls, and also, as said to me by my informants, many of them want a life outside the bars. When

doing fieldwork, I found it difficult to talk to women or men who had met their respective partners in the go-go bars; it was a topic they mostly avoided. In Sabang many relationships are formed in the go-go bars, and I learned about them mainly through gossip. Although I got to know such couples, these men and women were often not willing to talk to me about how they met or about their present relationship, other than repeating the typical constructions of cultural differences between Filipinos and foreigners. Unfortunately I have only little insight into what actually happens after the bar girls stop working with commercial sex.

The bar girls I got to know or talked to more briefly almost invariably (though there are exceptions) state that the main motivator to enter and to stay in the sex industry stems from a need to support themselves and their children. A primary allure is the income they can potentially make. Many also often say that the bar world offers also at least the opportunity to meet a prospective foreign husband. These factors, the allure of quick and relatively considerable amount of money and prospects of marrying a foreigner, often motivate bar girls to keep working or returning to work in the go-go bars.

Hunting Girls

Not all women working in Sabang's sexscape monitored as described above. Some women work on a freelance basis outside the system of go-go bars. Sabang attracts a number of 'freelancers,' 'working girls,' or as they are locally commonly called: 'hunting girls.' The hunting girls are not employed by a go-go bar nor registered as bar girls in the local municipal records. They do not have to share their earnings with a go-go bar, and they remain outside the controlled part of the sex sector. They do not receive Pink Slips to present to potential customers and can only claim to be able to verify that they're regularly tested for HIV and STDs if they can show private certificates of testing.

Like Linda, hunting girls often started out working in go-go bars, but when they no longer wanted or could not cope with fulfilling the obligations of the bars, they drift towards freelancing. The non-complaints policy was also considered an obligation they did not want to comply with.

Some of the hunting girls I talked to had arrived in Sabang with the diffuse hopes of meeting a foreign man to marry or to form a long-term relationship, but later found that they were without support when their boyfriends or husbands abandoned them. They stayed on in Sabang supporting themselves through their relationships with foreigners, though not always explicitly being paid for sex.



*Enticing a prospective customer
by physical contact.*

Meeting potential customers for hunting girls takes place in the non-go go bars or pubs in Sabang. But they risk not being welcome in those venues if they do not wish to be associated with commercial sex. Hunting girls may experience difficulties in finding places to pick up customers. The go-go bars are not available to them as “no unescorted ladies are allowed inside,” as a common sign outside the go-go bars warns. This sign was directed at hunting girls or bar girls from other go-go bars, but as a white woman I was generally not taken to be a hunting girl on the prowl and was allowed to enter. As a white tourist, I was granted certain privileges my Filipina informants could not access. I often acted as an escort for hunting girls such as Linda, when she wanted to visit a go-go bar. We were treated with hospitality, and I with curiosity by the bar girls we met. Since Sabang is a small town, most bar girls and hunting girls knew about each other, so Linda usually had some friends in the go-go bar we patronized.

Linda started in the sex industry by working in a go-go bar, but after

a few years she felt that the requirements were “so strict, you always had to report to the *mamasan*, your pay is cut for everything,” and she started working on her own. Linda often returned to the topic of freelancing versus working in a go-go bar. She said that she earned much more as a hunting girl. She told me with visible pride that she demanded at least 3 000 pesos (USD 60) a night, roughly 1 000 pesos (USD 20) more than the amount a bar girl earned in a go-go bar. She also told me that she could choose her customers as she pleased, that she had no pressure from the bar to earn money, and that she was free to come and go whenever and wherever she wanted. At times she had more long-term relationships, lasting from a week to several months. During that time the boyfriends did not pay her outright for sex, but rather financed her expenses. The customers sometimes took her with them on their travels in the Philippines, and at one time she had also visited her boyfriend in Sweden for three months. Traveling abroad was a great adventure for a woman like Linda, who said that she came from a poor background, but that through her work she was able to gain experiences, like traveling, that very few poor people can afford. Linda seemed, however, disappointed at her experience of Stockholm. Her boyfriend, Linda said, had mostly sat around doing drugs. Linda was herself no stranger to drug use, and eventually her addiction to *shabu* (a metamphetamine, also called ‘ice’)⁶ became so severe and obvious that she was no longer considered attractive in Sabang’s sexscape, and the last I heard was that she worked in Angeles.

Desperate economic need is often the first reason any bar girl or hunting girl offers when telling me how they entered the business of sex. The women I got to know said that they had seen no other alternative. The issue of poverty in relation to commercial sex is a sensitive one. Bar girls may invent or exaggerate life stories such to elicit sympathy from customers and an inquisitive foreign anthropologist, in Sabang as well as elsewhere (Lindquist 2009: 95; Ratliff 1999: 82). This may be a way, or the only way, for bar girls to justify their decisions in their own as well as in the public’s eyes. Law found that her informants in the bars of Cebu

⁶ See also Lindquist (2009: 85f) on the use of drugs for bar girls and their customers. In Batam, Indonesia, the customers would also use ecstasy to relax. In Sabang most customers prefer to engage in drinking alcohol as part of their touristic experience and relaxation. The distribution and usage of *shabu* and other illegal drugs was thus mainly a matter handled by Filipinos.

were “inclined to situate their employment within the struggles of everyday life and Catholic beliefs (e.g. suffering, shame and martyrdom)” (Law 2000: 48). Law writes that “...it is also important to stress that the role of ‘shame’ in Filipino culture plays a constitutive role in solidifying ambiguities into a coherent identity. Catholicism often invites women to embrace the status of the martyr or victim, and while dancers are able to credit themselves with worth and agency, the performance of a victim identity is significant” (Law 2000: 80). The life stories I was told by bar girls in Sabang may have been remodeled to fit a stereotypical image of the suffering woman (and mother), and some chose to work in the bars for reasons other than extreme poverty. Although it is important not to victimize all experiences, choices, and motivations of all women in the sexscape, most of my informants emphasized that they came from poor backgrounds. Considering the strong stigma attached to commercial sex in the Catholic Philippines, entering the world of commercial sex is certainly not an easy choice to make.

But poverty and desperate need was not always what women said was the primary factor for engaging in the world of commercial sex in Sabang. One evening I met a Filipina named Clara, who occasionally work as a hunting girl. I was at a pub, and she came up to the table I was sitting at. We started talking. Clara was out on her own that night and felt like some company. She told me that she had a steady boyfriend, an American who was good-looking, a nice man who had a good job as an engineer. Clara told me: “He doesn’t know that I sometimes go to Sabang to hunt. He would get so angry if he knew.” When I asked her if she would bring her boyfriend to Sabang she answered: “No, no, because everybody here knows me; then he would know. He will never go here, I won’t let him.” Clara said that she came to Sabang to hunt for the excitement and to have sex: “I can’t help myself. When I see a good-looking guy I think: ‘Oh my God, I want to fuck him.’” For Clara it was a sense of excitement and sexual pleasure that motivated her to seek commercial sex. Scholars like Law (1997a; 1997b; 2000) and Brennan (2004a) argue, women in sex work are not wholly victims, that not “*all* sex workers in *all* contexts are powerless victims of violence and exploitation” (Brennan 2004a: 24). Clara didn’t need the money and focused on the thrills she felt when hunting. But she was not prepared to reveal this side of her to her boyfriend of fear that he

would want to be in a relationship with a hunting girl. Also Clara feared the stigma of being a ‘prostitute.’

Like bar girls, hunting girls often travel between the different geographic hotspots for commercial sex: Angeles, Subic, Barrio Baretto (outside Olongapo), Cebu, Manila, and Sabang, depending on the availability of customers. The relative autonomy of the hunting girls is double layered: Linda often emphasized her independence and her ability to have control over her earnings. On the other hand, she said, it was tough having to hunt for customers. Like most women I got to know in Sabang’s sexscape, Linda always needed a few beers before she could approach potential customers in order to overcome her inhibitions, to overcome her shyness, as she said, and she took *shabu* as well.

An important strategy among bar girls as well as hunting girls when attracting customer was to be subtle about taking payment. In tune with the system of bar fines, which downplays the commercial aspect of commercial sex, some hunting girls interact with their customers so subtly that the commercial aspect was difficult for the men to detect – a risky road to travel since it could lead to putting off their prospective financiers or lovers.

One evening I was approached by Jens, a Dutch man in his 30s whom I had encountered a few nights earlier. He was upset and wanted to talk about the frustration he felt regarding a woman. Shortly after he first had arrived in Sabang he had spent an evening in a bar and there had met a woman with whom he had spent the following few days. During this time they had split the bills for their costs for meals and drinks and spent the nights in his room, which he had paid for. After three days, he told me with some bitterness in his voice, she had started talking about receiving financial support for her grandmother who she said had an illness and that she needed help in financing the hospital bills. Jens had then understood that she was a hunting girl and had asked her to leave, without giving her the donation she had asked for, and their relationship ended. The woman had shortly thereafter met another tourist, and that evening they were seated in the same bar, across from us. Jens was upset and felt deceived. He told he had no idea that she was a hunting girl, and that he was very disappointed since he thought it was “for real.”

Hunting girls, like bar girls, try to extend the relationship beyond the

boundaries of the common perceptions of commercial sexual exchange and reject the notion of their work as mere sex for money. This is an example of what Cohen (1996) has described as a “skillful game of luck.” The women in commercial sex in Sabang also apply a variety of strategies in order to approach a potential customer and to keep the relationship going. In Jens’s case, the hunting girl seemed to have been too subtle, which led Jens to misinterpret her expectations of the monetary aspect of their involvement, and this ended up with him being disappointed when he realized he was expected to make a substantial financial contribution to the woman. The hunting girl, for her part, lost a potential customer. Thus, hunting girls also aspire to have an open-ended relationship, but they need to tread carefully in order to maintain the image of intimacy between themselves and their customers but still gain from the relationship. In the case with Jens, the hunting girl lost money instead of making some.

Tourists and Stereotypes of Them

Rick was a British man in his 60s, divorced with grown-up children and retired from his work as a government employee. Rick was traveling around the Philippines, and, before coming to Sabang, he had stayed in Angeles, Subic, and Barrio Barretto, all located a few hours away from Manila. Rick was candid with his intentions: “I’m a sex tourist. I’m here for the girls.” He heard about Sabang from other tourists and his temporary girlfriends, and decided to go there to check out the nightlife. He found Sabang to be “a piece of heaven,” and settled in the town for a couple of months. Rick spent most of his nights at the go-go bars, enjoying the attention he got from “all the beautiful women.” Rick didn’t scuba dive, so he spent the daytime wandering around, sunbathing and swimming and having beers and chit-chats with fellow tourists and expats. Rick was one of the few tourists to participate in local Filipino social events, such the *barangay* fiesta, or watch a basketball game played by the local youth. However, after a while Rick started complaining about the lack of things to do, and he began to feel restless. He eventually left Sabang to revisit other sex tourism sites in the country before returning home. He left with the promise of returning to Sabang, which he also does regularly.

When talking to male tourists in the bars I was on their turf, and many men seemed to be comfortable talking to me about their experiences, thoughts, and opinions of the go-go bars and the women they encountered. Derek, a British man in his 20s reacted, upon learning that I was a researcher, by telling me: "Put me in your survey. I'm here for the women. The women and the sex." In contrast to Derek's eagerness to identify himself as a sex tourist, it is reported that 'sex tourist' is a label often avoided by tourists, who are described as applying various strategies to distance themselves from the identification of sex tourists, and some wish to disassociate themselves from the derogative values the term implies (Garrick 2005; Günther 1998). Commercial sex is often described in the literature on sex tourism as something men prefer to talk quietly about, due to the stigma attached to it. Although some tourists I met in Sabang avoided me when I was in the go-go bars or when I met them at pubs, this was generally not my experience. Unlike Wiss (2005: 51), I found that many male tourists in Sabang were willing to talk about their experiences of commercial sex, and it was not uncommon for them to identify themselves as sex tourists, or at least tourists who paid for sex. Although in Wiss's experience these men resented an outsider's (the anthropologist's) intrusion, I felt that the community of tourists and expats was so firmly set that I as an outsider did not bother them much. At the time of my fieldwork I often felt that commercial sex had become so integral to the tourism scene that sex tourists and expats did not need to defend or hide their actions to me.

When going through my notes from my various periods of fieldwork from not only Sabang but also Olongapo (where I conducted a three-month study of go-go bars and former bar girls for a bachelor's thesis) I saw great variety in the tourists' desires in regards to commercial sex. Rick said: "I don't mind them being older," meaning women in their 40s rather than teens or 20s. A Dutch man said: "Filipinas have more heart in it. Thais are more business-like." A Canadian man had a theory: "Men in their 50s are horny but women in the same age are frigid and they are not as attractive." Since a general preference for young bar girls is an issue amongst both men buying sex and in scholarly discussions. Rick, however, said: "It's nice to be with a woman. Who wants a teenager?" In our talks, it transpired that he thought teenagers were too inexperienced at sex in order to satisfy his desires. The men I talked to put forth different aspects

as relevant for their experiences of Sabang's sexscape, such as age of the bar girls, a sense of intimacy in their interactions and relationships with bar girls, and notions of their own and the bar girls' gendered sexuality.

On countless occasions I was told by both tourists and bar girls that Filipinas in general are "better at being women" than Western women. Filipinas were described as more caretaking, attentive, feminine, and less aggressive and demanding than Western women. This is certainly not exclusive for Sabang or the Philippines. Brennan (2004a: 33) points out that sex workers in the Dominican Republic appropriate the sex tourists' discourse of Western women and create a role for themselves as different, in alignment with their customers' expectations of them as better lovers and more passionate. This was also done by the bar girls in Sabang, perhaps as a strategy to depict themselves as desirable wives to their customer. The men, no matter if they were involved in commercial sex or not, in Sabang, for their part, often talked to me about how women in the West had been ruined by feminism, but that Philippine women still new how to be 'real' women; attentive, taking care of the household, and family-oriented and thus live up to the stereotypical image of a disenchanting Western male looking for a more authentic woman (Burton 1997; Hamilton 1996; O'Connell Davidson 2001; Seabrook 2006; Wiss 2005).

One reason for engaging in commercial sex was often stated by the tourists I talked to was simply the availability of young Filipinas. As one Australian man in his 30s said: "Do you see all these beautiful young women here? Do you see what beautiful skin they have, their eyes, their bodies? Do you see how they treat me? They want me here, they come running after me." This man was aware that he represented a business potential for the bar girls, but that didn't bother him, and he enjoyed the attention he was given anyway: "Yes, it's part of their business, it's all about the money for them, but I don't care. Do you think I would ever get such beautiful women at home? Women like these would never look at me twice at home. Here I can have everyone I like."

Male tourists in Sabang said to me that they also sought to evade lasting obligations of their sexual engagement with bar girls, and that they appreciated the naturalness of the bar girls, that they could be shy and that they were not behaving as 'professionals.' The tourists wanted freedom from constraints, but with a particular kind of sex worker, one that

didn't come across as such (Burton 1997: 193f). The open-ended character of how commercial sex was organized and the bar girl's efforts to downplay the commercial aspect were what attracted them to Sabang and its sexscape: it wasn't as seedy as curb crawling or paying for sex by the hour or act. However, it became clear to sex tourists such as Rick that the sexscape was not free from constraints and obligations, and he realized that the smorgasbord he imagined may take specific forms in a specific socio-cultural setting and that various bonds of obligations and relationships between the bar girls and their customers are very much present in the go-go bars of Sabang.

Rick stopped going to the go-go bars for commercial sex after some time. He said it had become "too complicated and too demanding" since he had gained a reputation of being a 'butterfly,' going from one bar girl to another. His rather intense practice of bar fining a new girl whenever he wanted to was not favorably countenanced by the bar girls. Rick had first expected to be able to pick and choose according to his whims, but he found that the go-go bars presented a social world governed by their own particular rules and norms, which were not easy to detect at a superficial glance. Bar girls become annoyed if a customer returns to the go-go bar to bar fine another girl, and they find it particularly upsetting if the customer chooses to bar fine someone who they consider close, such as a friend or relative. Rick eventually discovered this and found that the 'drama' of his bar hopping and bar fining was too demanding. What he reported as his venturing into a go-go bar was accompanied with quarrels among the bar girls of who had the right to him and who did not. These quarrels didn't suit his idea of sexual heaven. He also told me that several women claimed that he was the father of their children. Rick has had a vasectomy, so this didn't bother him. "It's the game of the bars, you get used to it," he said. He then started making arrangements with hunting girls and spending periods of his vacations in Barrio Baretto and Angeles just to let things cool down before returning to Sabang again. As Wiss (2005: 143) points out there are indeed strings attached: "One of the first things long staying foreign men realize is that contrary to the initial expectations, bar-girls are not disposable; they have contacts, strategies and ways of gaining money from a man, staying on to extract more – or even make him leave." In Sabang's sexscape, there are bonds of friendship, kinship, and loyalties shaping the

interactions between the women in commercial sex that the customers are made aware of, at least if they stay on for a while.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter is an ethnographic account of women working in Sabang's sexscape, and through the ethnography I focus on three slightly overlapping themes: how commercial sex is organized to take the form of being indeterminate or open-ended, how this is present in the relationships and transactions between sex workers and their customers, and how identities are negotiated.

Regarding the first theme, indeterminacy, all actors strive to make commercial sex seem as non-commercial as possible but still make a profit out of it. The idea is to create a version of Sabang's sexscape to be 'a piece of heaven' for men who wish to pay for sex, while the bar girls' interactions with their customers are organized to downplay the commercial aspects. It also keeps the illegality of prostitution at bay. These complicated practices involve blurred lines, or gray zones, that avoid practices associated with bolder or more direct prostitution are appreciated by both bar girls and their customers.

Regarding the second theme, women in Sabang's sexscape work hard to make their encounters with customers seem non-commercial, or more like shorter or longer intimate relationships than strict payment for sex. Men may find it difficult to understand since commercial sex doesn't work the same way in the West, or as people imagine it to work in the West. The men want an ideal woman, but without the commitment – with some exceptions. Women also find it difficult to negotiate their different roles. Women actively manipulate their roles in order to be commercially viable but also to maintain a sense of integrity.

Regarding the third theme, bar girls try to keep their view of themselves as moral and as good Catholic women, but they are restricted by the evaluation of them as 'fallen women' by the community in which they work. Working in the gray area facilitates the bar girls' own avoidance of stigmatizations of their work, at least for themselves, though rarely not successfully so in the eyes of local Filipinos. The bar system is embedded

in the local context, which plays into the bar girls' actual possibilities of avoiding reductive identifications and stigmatization. Commercial sex in Sabang is always within a cultural, social, economic and political setting, which is an issue I address in the following chapter.

5. Living in a Sex Tourism Town

Introduction

When I first arrived in Sabang the ubiquity of the go-go bars led me to assume that the sex industry was an accepted part of Sabang's tourism scene. I rather simplistically thought that people who lived in the town didn't question its existence. During the course of my fieldwork, however, I realized there was a vigorous debate about the go-go bars. People struggled to make sense of the fact that they were involved, actively or unintentionally, in an economy and social settings that many found highly morally inappropriate. People were very articulate on the topic of the importance commercial sex had in the local economy. I also saw how the local population and the local government tried to mitigate the perceived threats to public and private morality, while simultaneously maintaining and contributing to the continuance of the profitable go-go bars. It made me wonder what it means to live in a sex tourism town. How do people negotiate the morality of sex tourism, and of being economically dependent on sex tourism while simultaneously distancing themselves from the negative connotations of commercial sex?

This chapter focuses on the various ways the local population discusses the consequences of directly or indirectly supporting a business that in many ways epitomizes their notions of sexual immorality. In the literature on sex tourism, the host community is often treated merely as a support system for the sex trade. Research tends to focus on how the bar girls (or other providers of commercial sex) experience the surrounding community. Little scholarly attention has been given specifically to the people and practices outside the immediate exchanges of commercial sex. My informants made me aware of how issues of boundary-making between morality and immorality were very significant for them, and how Sabang

was constructed as simultaneously a moral and as an immoral place. There have also been local efforts to bring about changes in the local sex industry, and I will examine the debates regarding a highly controversial municipal suggestion to close down all go-go bars. In the discussions regarding this suggestion, the complexities involved in identification of places and activities as either moral or immoral become prominent.

Sabang as “Little Ermita”

Sabang is sometimes called “Little Ermita” by visitors and locals. Ermita is an area in Manila that long has been associated with commercial sex, with numerous go-go bars lining the streets. What is particularly relevant here is that in 1993, a shutdown of go-go bars in Ermita was ordered by the then Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim, in an attempt to curb the sex industry (Ofreneo & Ofreneo 1998: 122). For a few years it declined, but the ban lapsed due to legal concerns and soon the go-go bars were back again, though not in the same numbers or scale as before. In Sabang, people know about and some remember the initial effects of the shutdown, which included a sharp decline in tourists spending their nights out on the town and numerous businesses being forced to close. Many of my informants express fear that a shutdown in of the go-go bars Sabang would have the similar result as in Ermita.

For many of my informants Ermita is the epitome of an immoral place. Calling Sabang “Little Ermita” is, as one could expect, not particularly appreciated by locals. In one of our talks, Bituin, who is married to a local man, and who has a vegetable stand in Sabang’s fresh market, expressed concern over the epithet: “Of course, being one of the people here, it’s so bad to hear that.” Bituin, who had lived in Sabang her whole adult life, felt that the situation was becoming overwhelming. Bituin had five daughters, the oldest of whom was on the verge of becoming an adolescent. Bituin feared her daughters would become influenced by the behaviors of bar girls, and often talked about moving from Sabang before the younger children become affected by what was going on around them. On the other hand, Bituin acknowledged her dependency on the tourists, including sex tourists, though mainly indirectly, for her business as

a vegetable vendor. Another local Filipina in her 20s found the sexscape (Brennan 2004a: 16) deeply problematic, saying: “Even though I want to set a bomb just to get rid of this, I can’t. I can’t do that. It’s really a shame and I feel so bad, you know, but I can’t do anything about it. I am from Puerto Galera [Sabang], and this has happened to my hometown. This is my home, but this is really not what I wanted for my town to happen, and yet this is happening. You can’t do anything about it anymore”. She refers to a sense of dependency and helplessness, viewing the bar scene as undesirable but inextricable facet of Sabang.

The go-go bars are not only seen as spaces of sexual immorality, but also symbolize other criminal and illicit activities such as corruption and the use of, and trade in, drugs. The bars often act as symbols of what is wrong with Philippine society, of a corrupt society where if you can pay you can do whatever you wish. However, Sabang, like most places, can’t simply be identified as a ‘mere’ immoral sex tourism site, just as the Ermita-area it is associated with. It is also a place where people live, work, and relax. My informants made me aware of how issues of morality and immorality of Sabang, as a lived village, were highly significant, and in particular how Sabang was constructed as simultaneously a moral as well as an immoral place. The multiple meanings of Sabang become more evident when we examine how people endeavor to maintain a view of Sabang as simultaneously an ‘ordinary’ *barangay* as well as a Little Ermita, a sex tourism site.

Ambiguous Places, Ambivalent Ownership

The six go-go bars are located along the main alleyways that run through the central part of Sabang. In daytime, when the go-go bars are closed, the fronts of the doors are often occupied by street vendors, who sell copied DVDs, fruits, or jewelry. The entrances to the go-go bars are then barely detectable unless one looks up to study the unlit signs above the doors. Even these signs are generally quite inconspicuous, consisting of merely the name of the bar. The most explicit signs feature a painted picture of a crouching woman in a top and short skirt holding a dance pole or the silhouette of a nude woman. Otherwise the signs indicate little of the nature

of the nighttime activity. However, as soon as the go-go bars open, usually around 7 pm and until they close at around 2 am, these bars dominate the area with loud music, blinking lights, and people coming and going. The business of commercial sex is a night-time activity, if undertaken during the day it is done away from the main paths and indoors. The go-go bars facing the main pathway cover their entrances with thick curtains, which a front-door man opens for you at the slightest sign of interest of entering. This practice keeps the morally inappropriate activities out of sight, so to speak, as the curtains offer passersby the possibility of turning a blind eye to what is going on inside.



Outside a go-go bar during day and night.

However, one of the more recently opened go-go bars, a Western-owned one, first adopted another strategy to attract customers, which perhaps more corresponds to a general image of the front of an Asian go-go bar: bar girls dressed in their work clothes, a miniskirt, short top and over-knee boots, sat on high stools outside the entrance to act as ‘appetizers.’

This outside and public display of the commercial sex industry was widely viewed by locals, Filipinos and expats alike, as a breach of conduct, and inappropriate. The word ‘eyesore’ was used not only by local Filipinos but also expats when describing seeing women standing or sitting outside the go-go bars. While bar girls at other go-go bars at times would go outside to catch some fresh air or talk to friends, displaying bar girls was not a part of the other go-go bars’ regular strategy to attract customers. This division of Sabang into spaces for immorality in order to protect the morality of other spaces is supposed to guarantee that the morally questionable spaces should not interfere with ‘ordinary’ people in their ‘ordinary’ lives: break the implied rules and you will be disliked among the rest of the locals. Nonetheless, the bar in question seemed to attract customers as efficiently as any of the other go-go bars. It was popular among tourists but not among several of the expats I talked to, who, like local Filipinos, regarded this practice of having bar girls as appetizers out of line, too blatantly displaying what was going on inside. Having stationed bar girls outside made it impossible to gloss over the fact that Sabang was indeed a sexscape.

Sometimes the delineation of moral and immoral spaces become blurred, such as in the case of the Centrum Disco. The Centrum Disco opened in the mid-2000s, and it was the first establishment to open for the local youth. Initially offering Music Nights where Filipino live bands performed, it had a dedicated dance floor where the customers could dance – a feature not found in any other establishment in Sabang, since dancing is generally exclusive to the bar girls at the go-go bars. Although the Centrum Disco initially was a regular disco without commercial sex, it soon became clear that this form of entertainment was not sufficiently popular, and it was closed down.

The reason the Centrum Disco closed was because it muddled the lines between moral and immoral spaces and practices. The Disco was a place of dubious character and rumors of the ‘immoral’ behavior of the local Filipino youth, such as getting drunk, having unchaperoned interaction between the sexes, of the bar providing bar girls, of drug use, and so forth. Thus, the customers risked their reputation by being spotted at there. The Centrum Disco engaged popular bands from Manila, playing the latest hits, in what I believe an attempt to attract the youth with an air

of upper-class Manilaño behavior, tastes, and preferences. This attitude, however, did not translate well into the context of Sabang, a community in which most Filipino locals continue to identify themselves as being provincial and conservative, and also take some degree of pride in it. The concept of the Centrum Disco might well have worked in White Beach, which is visited by wealthy and middle-class Filipino tourists from Manila, but it could not transcend the social control over local youth in Sabang. Finally, the Centrum Disco did not last because it didn't attract foreigners to a sufficient extent. Male foreigners who wished to experience nightlife preferred the go-go bars. The disco thus failed to draw the most financially strong customers. In the end, a large part of the Centrum Disco was turned into a go-go bar, to which the local youth were again denied access, and only a small area remained a regular pub.

The sensitivity of Centrum Disco as a place for local youth shows how places are charged, in this case morally, racially, financially, and according to gendered norms. Before it was turned into a go-go bar, when still a regular disco, it was already a space of dubious character. The disco was a place where sex workers would go in search of customers, the local youth would drink and meet, unchaperoned. But it had its attraction, and I was often asked by young female domestic migrants who worked as waitresses in the fringes of the sexscape to escort them to the Centrum Disco. I was a popular option as company because most of the local youth at the Centrum Disco arrived in groups of friends. Domestic migrants, however, did not have this network of support when entering a space of potentially questionable character. As a Western woman, I was assumed to be familiar with, comfortable, and especially interested in visiting such venues, and this probably gave the women an incentive to utilize me as an excuse to enter and spend time in the disco. Though not the most popular place among foreigners, the Centrum Disco was one of the very few places I've seen Filipinos and foreigners socialize at the same time. Usually nighttime activities are spent separately. Filipinos are rarely seen in bars patronized by foreigners, and Filipinos tend to meet up at the house of a friend. The Centrum Disco was a morally ambivalent space, and its closing signaled that Sabang was not prepared to deal with such a venue of entertainment; it was identified by Filipinos as too similar to the other entertainment facilities in Sabang, and by foreigners it was seen as being not sufficiently like

them. The balance of Filipino cultural ideals and foreigners' preferences was upset. Divisions between the morally appropriate and inappropriate sometimes become difficult to maintain, in particular when places and their meanings, as well as practices relating to these places, are redefined and transformed. The Centrum Disco did that for a while, but the identifications of the disco and the actions of the people in it as being of morally dubious character made the Centrum Disco difficult for the local Filipino population to tolerate in the long run.

Over the years there have been some shifts in the ownership and degree of involvement in the sexscape in regards to who owns and runs them. With only three to six go-go bars, it is difficult to draw any conclusions, but there are some indications worth noting. In the beginning (the 1980s to mid 1990s) the go-go bars were in complete control of local Filipinos. The local families owning property in the central areas have gained substantially from the go-go bars and have as of late been able to at least publicly distance themselves from association with the go-go bars and the immorality they connote. In the mid to late 1990s Westerners took over a couple of the go-go bars, and ten years later all but one were run by Korean expats. However, local Filipino families continue to benefit from commercial sex through lucrative land leases.

Rafael was a man in his 60s who had made his fortune from owning and running go-go bars. Through the sexscape Rafael could acquire wealth. Locals also said that this wealth was also the main source of his political power and social prestige, as he also became to *barangay's* most successful political representative anyone could remember. In our interview he vehemently denied any personal involvement in commercial sex, and he told me several times he had nothing to do with the go-go bars and that he only ran a karaoke bar (which indeed did not offer commercial sex, but was a popular place for hunting girls to pick up customers). I asked him if he leased land to foreigners. He answered: "No, nothing, *wala*. I don't want to. I don't want to, I don't like to be *ander* [subordinated, literally: under] them." In fact Rafael did indeed lease land to foreigners, and some of the most popular go-go bars were located on his land. His official position at this time, though, was to deny any involvement with foreigners, and commercial sex. Soon after this interview Rafael fell ill, and I was not able to re-question him on the issue of leases. Nonetheless, the fact that

what he told me contradicted his actual practice is interesting to note. His lie exemplifies the sensitivity or hesitation towards publicly acknowledging any connection to the go-go bars that local Filipinos express.¹ The issue of gaining from the sexscape was highly charged, and denial of one's proximity to it was sometimes the favored choice of action. Rafael had an ambiguous stance towards the go-go bars. As a public figure he condemned them, but he also privately continued to benefit from it. His reluctance to be associated with the go-go bars illustrates the conflicting ideas, ideals, and practices local Filipinos have to negotiate.

Denial and Euphemisms

The paradox of condemning the sex trade while simultaneously condoning and supporting it is present in many of my informants' daily lives. In maintaining the local community's sense of moral standing while simultaneously being dependent on an industry that many of my informants, in particular Filipino ones, deemed as highly immoral, many locals adopt various modes of resistance for fear of being negatively looked upon by people from other *barangays* and other parts of the country. Many informants express anxieties about being labeled as a sex tourism town, and with the immorality this entails. The financial gains of the go-go bars are measured against the difficulties in facing the stigma locals might experience. When facing this paradox, locals, in particular Filipinos employ distancing strategies (Joseph and Kavoori 2001), and these strategies of resistance center on creating a distance between themselves and the sexscape.

One such strategy is rhetorical. During one of my visits to the local branch of the national Department of Tourism, I brought up the issue of the go-go bars but was interrupted by the official: "Prostitution?" she said "No, there's no prostitution here." When I pointed out that there are registered GROs (Guest Relations Officer) and Entertainers in municipal

1 Agar (1996: 156) dismisses the debate on whether researchers should rely on what people say *or* on what people do as "ridiculous," and he reminds us that "differences between reports and behavior are normal part of human interaction" (Agar 1996: 159). People rarely have *one* clear opinion or point of view, memory, impression, or perception of things, and statements expressed in interviews can be "rhetorical, pragmatic, phatic, ironic or aesthetic" (Crapanzano 2012: 552), rather than conveying a univocal opinion.

records, the official said that “maybe some women are working to entertain only. Foreigners like to go to Sabang for the nightlife.” By refusing to acknowledge entertainment and nightlife as a common euphemism for commercial sex, the official was effectively able to deny any knowledge of commercial sex taking place. Strictly interpreted, this is understandable. Prostitution is illegal, and the official stance of the municipality is that only entertainment is provided. The commerce of sex is largely dealt with outside the control of the licensed go-go bars, although the go-go bars organize a place for sex workers and customers to meet each other. One could certainly wonder why the women registered as Entertainers or GROs are officially required to undergo a bi-weekly test for STDs and HIV if no sex is involved, but that small detail was conveniently overlooked by the tourism official.

Foreigners seem for the most part to be aware of Filipino notions of sexual morality and the stigma and shame associated with commercial sex. They seem to know that the Philippines is a Catholic country where sexual morality to a significant extent is constructed around female chastity. But, Filipino strategies of distancing themselves from the perceived immoralities of the go-go bars were dismissed or ironically joked about by several of my male foreign informants. Kurt, a vocal and opinionated German expat, said about Filipinos: “They have a very funny way of, of actually classifying an existing situation, so ‘since prostitution is against the law in the Philippines, we don’t have prostitution.’ Easy as that. So, all you are going to do is to call a *‘puta’* a ‘GRO’ and you’re done with it. This can be a two-faced thing that has a lot to do with the Catholic Church, that’s my view. You just call it something else and pretend it doesn’t exist and then you hope it goes away.” Kurt seemed to have difficulty accepting the local Filipinos’ strategies, which included denial and use of euphemisms, of avoiding becoming afflicted by the immorality of the go-go bars and to protect themselves and their own self-image. For local Filipinos then, living in Sabang requires sets of skills of rhetorically maintaining an image of morality, but when Filipinos aim to distance themselves from the sexscape, they risk being identified as hypocritical.

Tourists Demand Sex

When identifying changes in Sabang, Lilibeth, a local Filipina in her 60s who had a small tour business, told me: “They [Filipinos] are influenced by these people, these girls, influenced by the girls, the girls who are coming from the other places. We cannot [blame the tourists]. They just come here for their holiday.” In her remark Lilibeth expressed another aspect to the paradox many Filipinos cope with: that of condemning commercial sex as immoral, but tolerating and understanding the men who seek it. In dealing with these seemingly contradictory stances, the tourists’ need of ‘entertainment’ often is understood as an intrinsic and logical part of tourism.

Manuel was born in Sabang, and his family owns one of the largest Filipino-owned resorts. He defended the equation of tourism and commercial sex: “If there are tourists, there are night entertainments: that’s a fact of life. And if you do not subscribe to that, you’re a hypocrite, I would say. There are people who try to say that there are immoralities, but they continue to reap the fruits of the industry. Then they are not true to themselves, they are all hypocrites.” For Manuel, tourism and commercial sex are intrinsically intertwined, an opinion many locals I talked to shared. The idea is deeply rooted that tourists – implying male tourists – demand entertainment in the form of commercial sex. Kurt explained: “It’s always been there. I mean, sex tourism is a reality of life, no matter where you go. It is, after all the oldest profession in the world and it will always be necessary as an important part of the social fabric.” The male foreign tourists and expats I met tended to agree with the view of commercial sex as a natural and inextricable part of not only tourism but of male sexuality in general. Aside from repeating the platitude “the oldest profession in the world,” Kurt voices a common stance among Filipino and foreign locals that commercial sex is an inevitable part of human society, and an understanding of masculinity as based on notions of need for commercial sex is largely left unquestioned. There is a reliance on universalist ideas of men’s outgoing sexuality and that tourism and commercial sex are interlinked. This perspective is by no means unique to Sabang, but reiterated in other sex tourism destinations as well (Bishop & Robinson 1998; Crick 1989; O’Connell Davidson 1998).

In Sabang the commercialization of the sexual relations between a Western male and a Filipina/Asian women is often naturalized, seen as a natural form of relationship between a foreign man and a Philippine women (Wiss 2005). Some male tourists may not travel to Sabang with the explicit intention to pay for sex, but find themselves doing so anyway. I have on several occasions talked to newly arrived male tourists who at first expressed surprise over the prevalence of commercial sex and initially distanced themselves from it, at least to me. These men would often claim that they would never pay for sex, that they're not like the other men in Sabang. A few days later, however, I would often meet them in the company of a bar girl. In my observation, the process of getting accustomed to engaging in commercial sex seemed to be not only common, but fairly swift as well. Wiss (2005: 30) points out that contact with the "expat culture" seemed to influence the newly arrived male tourists in Sabang: in this the commercialization of the relation between Filipinas and Western men is often taken for granted, a view which the tourists often adopt:

In anthropological terms, it might be said that these men become acculturated to the local expatriate men's assertions that prostitution is the most *natural* form of relationship a foreigner could have with a Filipina, and that Sabang is the ideal location for this desire to be satisfied. In addition, as many of the tourists become accustomed to Filipinos as service providers to foreigners' needs and desires, the use of other services including sexual ones become more possible. (Wiss 2005: 30)

The naturalization of men's need for commercial sex is one way of making sense of the sex trade, and to mitigate the negative effects of the same. If the male sex drive is constructed as including the desire or need of purchase sex, then providing commercial sex becomes a comprehensible way of meeting this need. There are shared notions of male sexuality between Filipinos and foreigners, and Sabang is a place where these notions are to be acted out.

From the Outside

My informants often expressed anxiety about a transformation foremost of the female gender roles in Sabang. Although still considered more 'feminine' than women in the West, local Filipinos and ex-pats are expansive about how the bar girls, and how they challenge normative gender roles. They do so by behaving in a non-demure ways: they dress skimpily, and they publicly consume alcohol and cigarettes. Maria, a local woman in her mid-50s ran a small business with a few accommodations. Like many others she was dependent on the sexscape since many of her customers were tourists who also engaged in commercial sex. Maria's view was that the bar girls were engaged in sex work: "Because of the money. But they're not really poor. Their bodies want it and it's like they enjoy the play, they like to play the game." Maria downplayed the aspect of poverty, and focused instead on what she often witnessed: bar girls laughing, drinking, going pub hopping with foreign men. While this is part of the bar girls' job, Maria and other Filipinos I've talked tend not to recognize it as such but rather associate the bar girls' actions as expressions of leisure activities, as it is for tourists.

The bar girls are often conceptualized as primarily symbols of immorality, mostly by local Filipinos, but also by tourists and expats. A common saying among the foreigners is, for example; "You can take the girl out of the bar but never the bar out of the girl," indicating that the bar girls acquire some experiences and traits that they continue to hold to also outside the bar scene. The bar girls are often said to be without shame, lacking social skills, uneducated, money-hungry, immoral, and lazy. They become the ultimate symbols of the deviant, in particular in a Madonna-whore continuum along which most Filipinas are placed and evaluated. If the men's need for commercial sex is seen as something natural, even primordial, and left unquestioned, the women providing commercial sex are similarly essentialized: they are construed as inherently immoral and engaged in the business out of some bodily or psychological need. This naturalization of the bar girls' assumed voluntary choice to enter the bar world is often shared by Filipinos and foreigners.

These perspectives are locally strategically used in motivating the con-

tinuance of commercial sex. For example, often the bar girls' narratives of poverty and suffering are seen by both customers in Sabang and scholars as attempts to elicit pity among the customers (Law 2000; Ratliff 1999), rather than as explanations of how they came to enter the world of commercial sex. While there is an understanding that the bar girls may have been deceived into entering commercial sex, or that they did so out of necessity, they are also seen as having themselves to blame and often scorned by the surrounding community for not trying hard enough to get out of the business. Lilibeth, whose business was located in the vicinity of one of the go-go bars and who has for many years witnessed the activities of the go-go bars, said: "Sometimes it looks like they're their [the customers'] slaves. They [the customers] use the girls and then they don't pay, and that's a problem. I've heard this many times. And the girls go to the *Barangay* Captain complaining about it. But I say: 'And why you don't have an agreement before letting him use you? Tell him to give you money first before you pull your panties down. That's your job.' I think: 'Oh, go home, go to your province and do something. Plant something.'" Although she expressed pity for the bar girls when they are treated badly by their customers, Lilibeth also finds it hard to grasp the bar girls' perspectives of their choices in life, that in their own sense they work in the sexscape out of necessity and a sense of having no other viable choices.

One aspect of the local discourse of the presence of bar girls revolves around the potential negative effect they may have on the local youth. Young people are imagined to be easily impressionable, and watching the behavior of the bar girls is thought to affect the youth adversely. The potential effect the bar scene on the local youth was formulated by Emilia, the widow of a local man: "I don't want them to grow up with polluted minds with immoral acts, immoral shows that will lead the youth to also become immoral. If you tolerate these establishments, the time will come, really, when Puerto Galera will be ruined. We are afraid that the next generations will have no morals." Emilia reasons in line with thoughts of acculturation and demonstration effects, as does Perla, a local Filipina in her late 50s who runs a small resort, while at the same time being careful not to say anything offensive about the tourists: "The problem is that there are lots of girls outside, walking around, shouting, and they're almost naked,

and it's a problem when the children see them. That is the problem. But, there's no problem with the discos because they encourage tourists to come here, the problem is the girls."

Bar girls in Sabang are they often seen as overpowering forces of changing gender roles where women will be "sexually loose." It is feared is that women will be affected, something that Feliciano, an elderly local woman said had already happened: "Women now are so adventurous. Yes, I'm telling the truth because we're women. It's fine if we have self-control, but most of the women now have soft noses (*malalambot ang ilong*, that are "easy to get by men"), that agree right away. There are lots of those now. Oh, my God!" An 'authentic' Filipino woman, the racially and historically inscribed and gendered Filipina, is imagined as subservient, sexually modest, family-oriented, conservative, religious, and demure in act and speech, and bar girls' lack of correspondence with this image places them further outside the rest of the local Filipino community.

The root of 'problem' of the bar girls and the sexscape is often effectively placed on outsiders. Jun, a local man in his 50s and a member of the *Barangay* Council as well as a general manager of one of the go-go bars, explains: "When the numbers of tourists arriving from Manila grew, they already had partners, and then the prostitution grew here in Sabang. When the foreigners left, they left their partners in Sabang, they didn't take them back to Manila. In short, they were bringing the shit here. Bear in mind that these people who are working in night time, they are not naturally from Sabang. Go around and ask if there's anybody among the Sabang women, or Sabang girls working in this kind of business; no one. All of them are transients from different islands all over the Philippines."

A common and efficient way of resisting condemning discourse is by pointing out, just as Jun does, that commercial sex is something 'from the outside,' that it is not indigenous to Sabang, but brought in by foreigners (Wiss 2005). The foreigners brought the bar girls there, and the bar girls are always from the outside. Emilia, the widow of a local man explains: "Sometimes and I really see that it's really like Ermita. People are telling stories about what is happening every night and these women, these women are coming from different places. It is the only good thing that these ladies are not from here. They are transient. They do not come from this place." Emilia protects the morality of the local families by pointing out

the bar girls' outsider status. This outsider status is also maintained physically. The doormen are informed of the informal rule of not letting local men enter the go-go bars. However, in reality, every now and then local young men can be spotted in them – as friends of the DJ or bartender, and local big men can also sometimes be seen in them, having a drink. Restricting the original locals' access to the bars is said to prevent spousal frictions and jealousy on behalf of the wives, as Emilia said: "They are the cause of the broken families, they said, husbands are spending too much just to see the show, see?" The prohibition is seen as a way of securing a more peaceful environment. Furthermore, local women are not employed as bar girls in the go-go bars in order to uphold a local sense of morality. Furthermore, local women and their families usually have a source of income.

Wiss (2011: 14) makes the important point that "[t]he commercial sex industry is represented as the domain of two kinds of outsiders – non-local women and foreign men." This is something I also noticed while in Sabang. For example, whenever the subject of the go-go bars came up, Filipinos as well as foreigners quickly pointed out that "the women are not from here" and that the industry itself is not a part of their community. Placing the responsibility for the existence of a local sexscape on the 'outside' is a form of justification for the continuance of the bar scene. The 'outside' becomes associated with immorality, while the 'inside' is assumed to be morally appropriate. In claiming that the women are outsiders and the business of commercial sex was brought in by the tourists, the locals disassociate themselves from the immorality of the bar scene in order to retain family honor (Wiss 2005: 219). Sabang is constructed as a place for immoral outsiders as well as a place for moral insiders, both sharing the same geographical space.

The Lewd Shows Ordinance

So far I have dealt with how many people in Sabang divide the town into distinct moral zones by means of rhetoric strategies, naturalization of commercial sex, keeping a strict division between outsiders and insiders and creating spaces for morality and immorality. At the same time, there

is an ongoing political debate at the municipal level on how to best deal with commercial sex in the area, which tie into these themes. Any attempts to regulate commercial sex are very controversial since the whole municipality fear that any form of regulation would lead to a drastic decline in tourism. In these municipality-wide debates Sabang is not constructed as an ambiguous place, but rather, straightforwardly, as the center of local sex tourism.



A political meeting at the Municipal Hall on the topic of the Lewd Shows Ordinance

The Proponents: Protecting the Morality of the People

In 2006, voices of protest were raised against the existence of go-go bars, and never before had the protests against the local sexscape been so clamorous.² A municipal ordinance authored by a member of the Municipal

² Between 1996 and 1999 several ordinances had been formulated and passed, ordinances that in various ways aimed at abolishing, decreasing and regulating the bar scene. However, these attempts to curb the commercial sex scene were abandoned, leaving the go-go bars largely undisturbed for about a decade, with only irregular raids (Wiss 2005: 16-23). These ordinances were jointly referred to as the Lewd Shows Ordinance, which inspired the title of the ordinance discussed in 2006.

Council was proposed, entitled: “An Ordinance Prohibiting Lewd, Bold and Indecent Shows in Establishments for Entertainment and Providing Penalties for Violations Thereof” (M.O. 2006. No. 06-09). The Lewd Shows Ordinance, as it became known as, was the most comprehensive, detailed, and well-defined local municipal ordinances I have come across. The ordinance soon became highly controversial and widely debated. The ordinance stated:

It shall be the policy of the Municipal Government of Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro to adopt and implement measures designed to protect and promote public morals. [...] The Municipal Government will prohibit all forms of entertainment, activities and business that contribute to the deterioration of the moral character of the people, particularly the youth. The Municipality [...] will undertake measures to prevent [...] activities that adversely affect the moral well-being of the people. (M.O. 2006. No. 06-09)

The focus of the Lewd Shows Ordinance was threefold: to identify and prohibit places of lewdness, to regulate nudity/clothing of the women working in entertainment, and to control particular movements of their bodies. The main proponents of the ordinance was the Parish Pastoral Council of the Catholic Church, and members of other church-affiliated organizations, such as the Catholic Women’s League. Their primary concern was the protection of the morality of the public, and in particular the effects the immorality of the bars could have on the local youth. The goal was to compel businesses to provide, as it is stated in the M.O.: “wholesome family entertainment such as restaurants, music lounge and sing-along bars, coffee-shops and other decent forms of activities.” At a hearing with the Municipal Council, one of the pro-ordinance speakers said: “Morality issues are more important than monetary issues.” The speaker acknowledged that the passage of the ordinance might be a setback for the tourism industry, but the benefit would be a more moral community.

The activities in indecent establishments are defined in detail. Bold, lewd, and indecent shows are identified as “any exhibition featuring women and/or men either totally nude, wearing transparent clothes, showing

private parts of both sexes and provocative sexy dances. It also includes sex acts performed by women with the same or opposite sex.” Provocative dancing is defined as “any exhibition of dance intended to sexually stimulate any member of the public and conducted in an entertainment facility. [...] Performances or dances commonly referred to as table dancing, couch dancing, taxi dancing, lap dancing, private dancing or straddle dancing.” Even though I’ve spend a lot of time in go-go bars, many of these detailed forms of performances were not anything I’ve ever witnessed – the dancing that takes place in the go-go bars is on stage with no physical contact with the audience.

Rather than being concerned for the welfare of the bar girls or their customers, it is foremost the effects commercial sex may have on the host community, particularly the youth, that stands out in the proponents arguments. The main motivating factor lies in protecting the morality of the people outside of the go-go bars, not protecting those inside. The bars, and the behaviors inside them, are identified as sources of risk of immorality for the general population. With arguments of a demonstration and acculturation effect, the insider/outsider construction was seen as under threat and was in need of protection.

The Opponents: Protecting the Tourism Industry

The opponents of the Lewd Shows Ordinance were unsurprisingly predominantly owners of the go-go bars and other business owners in Sabang, who feared that a ban or restrictions of the bars would have a profoundly negative effect on the tourism sector. In response to the proposed Lewd Shows Ordinance, a “Petition of the People of Sabang” was composed (Anonymous 2006). This was an open letter to the Mayor signed by the six go-go bars and 32 establishments and 154 residents of Sabang, requesting *barangay* Sabang to be excluded from the suggested regulations. The arguments of the opponents centered around the conviction of Sabang’s tourism as dependent on the go-go bars.

In the petition, readers are reminded of the already-established rules and regulations that are in place to control the sex industry, and that if these were followed then the sex scene would not be as offensive to other

locals. The people I've talked to who are involved in the sexscape argue that is the local government that has failed to implement existing rules and regulations, not the bars' reluctance to comply with them. For example, it was pointed out to me that the check-ups for the bar girls are not enforced, but that if such regulations would be implemented then those with positive tests for STDs would be dealt with accordingly. In the petition, fears are expressed that the people of Sabang will again suffer from poverty if the go-go bars are closed, since the go-go bars provide entertainment, thus providing "something for the tourists to do." It is also argued that if Sabang can retain its image as a popular tourist site (which includes commercial sex), then new investors will be attracted to open businesses in Sabang (PGF 2006 4: 4, Sept. 16-30: 5).

The petition centers around the right to conduct businesses and the anticipated adverse effect such a ban would have on the tourism industry, and it is written in a frustrated tone:

What you are going to do is directly defeating our rights as people of Puerto Galera to have a business, to work and to live [and it is pointed out that] there already are rules and regulations in place, which allow for such businesses. [...] Because what you are going to do is directly killing the tourism industry, which you know is the main source of income of most people in tourism, in our barangay and even the people of every barangay in your area. (Anonymous 2006)

The sense of dependency on the go-go bars is evident. It is also suggested that the need for enforcing existing formal and informal regulations rather than banning the activities of the bars is seen as superfluous as ordinances are already in place, and the letter states: "in accordance with this is the strict prohibition of the said lewd shows which is better than starving most of the people and giving them a chance to do crimes and take bad jobs just to earn a living." All in all, the proponents do not directly address whether the go-go bars should exist or not, only that they already do – and that they can be regulated in a manner that would make them less offensive to locals.

Result: Political Turbulence

On the day of the vote of passing or rejecting the proposed Lewd Shows Ordinance, nine councilors of the Municipal Council were present at the voting session. Eight were in favor of passing the ordinance, while one opposed. Rafael, the only one of the council's representative originating from Sabang, was not present, and it was generally assumed that he was strategically absent. Had he been present, he would have had to take a side and publicly declare his stance on the issue, something he had effectively refused to do. Rafael had few options: either vote for, which would go against his community's economic interests, or against, which would risk branding him as supporting immorality.

The Lewd Shows Ordinance was passed on September 27, 2006. However, for an ordinance to take effect, the Mayor has to sign it. But, for the first time in living memory, a Mayor refused to sign a proposed ordinance, thus vetoing the ruling of Municipal Council regarding the Lewd Shows Ordinance. On October 9, 2007 the Mayor made the decision official through a letter to the public. In this letter, he expresses a fear of the potentially negative effects on tourism a close-down of the bars would entail. The Mayor refuses enter into a discussion of morality and immorality:

Lewdness and obscenity may well be a state of mind in a specific situation. But for the business in Sabang, for instance, this situation is not lewdness and obscenity but entertainment. [...] My veto of this ordinance is not a question of what is morally right and morally wrong. Rather, it is based on the pragmatic assessment of the conditions of the business industry and the influx of tourism, without disregard to the mandate to safeguard the moral fabric of the community. There must be a balance between absolute restriction and enlightened entertainment acceptable to our visitors. (Atienza 2006)

By calling it “enlightened entertainment” rather than commercial sex, the Mayor effectively evaded the issue of the existence of commercial sex. In the letter, he doesn't define the difference between the enlightened entertainment and what he would consider lewd. He also specified Sabang, out

of 12 other *barangays*, as the one that would suffer the consequences. He noted that this form of entertainment would be directed at tourists, making a distinction between local and foreign immorality. The Mayor turned to notions of dependency on commercial sex, and declared that, in line with other opponents of the M.O., that stricter regulation of the go-go bars would be in place in order to protect the morality of the community. He wrote in accordance with the opponents who called for a stricter adherence to existing regulations: “If the concern of the council is to nurture moral values and prevent early moral degradation among the youth and the member of the community, then perhaps it can be simply work along the line of limiting access to these establishments and/or imposing guidelines on the hiring of entertainers and artists.” He refers to the practice of not allowing local men enter the bar or local women to be hired as bar girls, which in my experienced was already enforced.

The Municipal Council considered the possibility of overriding the Mayor’s veto, a political possibility never previously discussed, but in the end the ordinance was laid to rest. When I asked people why the Lewd Shows Ordinance did not get pushed through, most people I knew shrugged and said that election time was coming up – and that no politician would want to take on this very charged subject. Amihan, an elderly local Filipina was not surprised by the outcome, that in the end nothing really happened, despite all the discussions. Amihan suspected greed and corruption to be at the root of the problem: “Nothing, you know, this (showing her fingers with a money sign) prevails, and you know our government... Those high leaders should decide on things but I think they can’t, you know what I mean.”

The Lewd Shows Ordinance was in the end abandoned, and I did not witness any change in previous practices. But rather than being silently accepted, the debates on the Ordinance showed that Puerto Galera in general and Sabang in particular have a politically active environment and that people do not silently embrace or reject the go-go bars; discussions are continuously undertaken, as evidenced by the debates the Lewd Shows Ordinance stirred up. The ordinance was an attempt to take control over what some considered being an undesirable feature of the municipality. The ordinance itself, the petition written by people involved in Sabang’s go-go bars, the municipal Mayor’s historic veto of the ordinance, the pub-

lic hearings, newspaper articles, and the general talk of the town all revealed how sensitive and at times also infected the issue of living in a sex tourism town can be.

Furthermore, a stated objective was to protect the 'innocent' parts of the Filipino population from the immorality of Sabang's sexscape. The ordinance and the debate around it failed to include the tourists' points of view and their role in the perpetuation of the sexscape. Primarily, however, there was a general silence about how the ordinance would affect poor Filipinos, those working more directly with commercial sex, and in particular the bar girls. These individuals, identified as outsiders, were easily ignored, having little access to sites of political power, and having little to say in local political matters. The people actually involved in the sexscape were thus not considered, only the perceived consequences that their actions would potentially have on others.

The Local Political Economy of Sex Tourism

In order to highlight the impossibility of separating the economy from social relations and identities, Wilson points out that the relationships formed in the go-go bars in Bangkok illuminate "the complex interplay between these intimate social relations and plural economic systems in a context shaped by transnational capitalism" (Wilson 2004: 11). In Sabang, the local economy is inextricably linked to tourism, and to tourism's strong connection to commercial sex; issues of tourism dependency, gender ideals, and morality/immorality become intertwined and elevated issues that trouble the local population.

There is an often-repeated discourse of dependency on tourism, and commercial sex becomes impossible to separate from tourism. Manuel, who thought his fellow locals were hypocrites in regards to Sabang's sexscape, formulated this clearly: "Once there are tourists, there must be entertainment; the entertainment sector must be there. Like in the case of Ermita, the hotspot of sex tourism in Manila, there were so many night life establishments before. Now, when the establishments are gone the number of tourist going to Ermita is not the same as before." Manuel views the clean-up campaign of Ermita as a negative example of what

would happen to Sabang if the go-go bars were to be closed, and Jun, a man with a broad smile, involved in *barangay* politics and a general manager of a go-go bar, reaffirms this position by stating: “As far as I know it’s like this: where there are tourists, there are workers like these. We didn’t invite them; it’s a problem of the tourism industry. But, you don’t have to say that the tourists are the problem because they are the source of development of the community, *di ba* [right]? So, how can you avoid it? If you say that we are going to ban this kind of workers, it means we are going to ban the tourists also. If the bars would really close, Sabang would be like it’s on Good Friday. Then all the bars are closed, it’s very quiet, and there’s nowhere to go.”

Most inhabitants I’ve talked to agree that the sexscape, constitutes a central part of Sabang’s economy, and that the municipality of Puerto Galera as a whole gains from the sex tourism industry. Although this is a dominant discourse in Sabang, the Lewd Shows Ordinance shows that the go-go bars are not unquestioned. People directly dependent on the go-go bars as the main source of livelihood, such as the bar owners, land owners, waitresses, general managers (such as Jun), *mamasans*, DJs, etc. are fairly limited in number. The vast majority of the local population benefits from the bar scene in a more indirect manner, such as hotels and resorts for accommodations, diving shops that benefit from tourists who dive in the daytime and visit the bar at night, or those providing vegetables to the restaurants patronized by customers of sex.

The strong local association between tourism and commercial sex can also be explained by the fact that the developments of the two were intertwined from the onset, and people have simply never experienced tourism without commercial sex (Chapter 2, *Becoming a Tourist Town*). When interviewing two Filipino men, I asked what they thought would happen if the go-go bars closed. First thing, one of them said: “Revolution,” and we all laughed. Like many of my informants, these two could see both positive and negative effects, as one of the men said: “There will be fewer tourists, less people will come there, so the stress within the community will be lessened and the stress for the environment will be lessened.” The other man said: “But the people in the area are already used to being comfortable and having an easy life so they cannot just accept that. And the income you know, the people who have these businesses...and then

suddenly have them closed...I think even the local government will be affected because of the tax that these bars are paying..."

On the issue of the reputation of Sabang as a sex tourist town, a Little Ermita, Kurt rather cynically reflects: "And when sex goes in, then you get a whole different kind of tourists, which will in turn drag down the reputation of the place and making it undesirable for another target market. If the path is set for certain reputation and it's very difficult to extricate yourself from this. And then, a very large chunk of income derived by the municipality was from the monthly check-ups of all the girls: they are actually incorporating this into their budget already. They see it as a necessity of daily life." Although Kurt exaggerates the frequency of the check-ups for the bar girls, he also points out a common perception that the Sabang as well as the municipality as a whole profit from the bar scene. As the bars and the girls who work in them are registered and monitored, perhaps to a greater extent than other areas of the tourism industry and they pay and taxes, they do indeed contribute to the local economy and government.

This, however, is not to say that Sabang and other sex tourism sites cannot change their image or find alternative sources of income. Leheny (1995) shows, for example, how new tourism demands in Thailand resulted in efforts to limit sex tourism on a national level. These efforts were undertaken in order not to discourage non-sex tourists to the country, such as financially strong Japanese tourists or families seeking exotic vacation sites. New demand thus cropped up and resulted in an active effort by the Thai national government to revise the country's image of a sex tourism haven. What Leheny points out is this that by emerging economic and political requests and efforts, the Thai government succeeded in creating new forms of tourism. Shifts in demand can influence and encourage alterations of the political economy of tourism (Leheny 1995: 369).

In Sabang, the reiteration of a sense of need for an income and a sense of dependency of the bar scene justifies its continuance. Locals host this industry and are dependent on it, but in particular the Filipino population also needs to separate itself from it; many see it as a part of Sabang that is potentially morally injurious. Regardless of a widespread notion of dependency, the debate on the Lewd Shows Ordinance showed that some inhabitants are cautiously optimistic about a potential closure of the go-go bars, while others (in my impression a majority) are highly skeptical to

the idea of a Sabang, or Puerto Galera as a whole for that matter, without commercial sex. Instead boundaries between inside morality and outside immorality are set in place in order to deal with the paradox of hosting commercial sex while also wishing to distance oneself from it, depending on commercial sex for an income but morally rejecting it. Economy and wealth are coupled with fears of association with immorality. Locals continuously make efforts to create boundaries to manage risks of immorality and economic dependency and can thus continue to benefit financially from the sex trade.

Recent Changes: Re-imagining Sabang?

Since the mid-2000s there have been some indications of a change in the image and attractiveness of Sabang, as well as some alterations in the demography of tourists. These tendencies can be attributed to the fact that a change in the general gender distribution of tourists has taken place, most notably with the growing presence of Korean tourists in Sabang. On the one hand, the go-go bars have continued and expanded; on the other hand more female tourists have found their way to Sabang. The larger resorts tend to be more family-oriented than the smaller accommodations, at times organizing children's activities so that the parents can go scuba diving. The larger resorts also more often accommodate tourists on packaged tours, and among Korean tourists packaged tours are particularly popular. Furthermore, female tourists of all nationalities increasingly are finding their way to Sabang. The previously established demography of the tourists is slowly being shifted; from having been a Western almost all-male tourism site Sabang is becoming more mixed, in terms of both gender and country of origin.

The growing presence of families and female tourists does not exclude sex tourism, but sex tourism no longer completely defines the tourist scene in Sabang. Commercial sex is no longer the main focal point of Sabang's tourism; scuba diving and other activities such as sunbathing and island hopping are again becoming increasingly significant. Sabang continues to be a sexscape, but not only that. As Leheny (1995) noted in Thailand, the transformation from being known as a sex tourist des-

tionation to attracting more varied tourism was largely demand driven, as political initiatives such as the Lewd Shows Ordinance failed to generate any concrete results. In Thailand, however, the consumer demands for more varied tourism were accompanied by deliberate political efforts to change the country's image, efforts lacking in Sabang. However, it must be pointed out that sex tourism and commercial sex are by no means being replaced by other forms of tourism activities and entertainment – on the contrary, the number of bars offering the sex for sale is increasing. In 2003 Sabang hosted three go-go bars offering commercial sex, and three years later the number had doubled. Attracting more tourists, and in particular more varied groups of tourists, does not automatically lead to a decline in commercial sex, but it may open up for another construction of Sabang: that of a destination for family vacations.

There is a double-sidedness (or triple, or quadruple) of tourism development: financial gain and comfort and affluence are put against threats to morality, which causes some anxiety (Lindquist 2009). There are continual efforts made to create moral boundaries, but also to gain financially from 'immorality.' This struggle is not negated by the humble increase in families and female visitors. It thus seems that images and practices can be complimentary, and that the construction of Sabang is widening, encompassing yet another construction of place. Notions of Sabang as becoming a place for commercial sex as well as a place for family vacations and attractive also to female tourists – this combination may well be a profitable one, as Sabang may become interesting to visit for new categories of tourists. A new form of tourism consumption may develop side by side with the already established form.

Concluding Remarks

Most spaces have multiple meanings, and Sabang is a good example of that. Sabang is a Little Ermita, a sexual tourist haven in the tropics for foreign men. It is also place for everyday life for local Filipinos, a place where it is central to keep immorality at bay in order to protect one's integrity. Lately Sabang has also been increasingly becoming a tourist site also for female tourists and families on vacation. These different 'Sabangs'

co-exist and are interdependent, not least through the central economy of tourism.

There is a recurring dilemma in locals' way of dealing with living in a sex tourism town: commercial sex is identified as highly immoral but at the same time it is seen as income generating and thus in need of protection. When resolving this paradox, the local sexscape is constructed on the premises that there is a natural, inextricable element in male sexuality which motivates commercial sex in tourism. There is also a degree of distancing oneself: locals, both Filipinos and foreigners, identify commercial sex as something alien to Sabang, something brought in by foreigners and the bar girls, leaving the local Filipinos 'innocent.' As discussed in chapter 4, *Bar Girls and Bar Work*, the bar girls are perceived as the ultimate deviants from appropriate Filipino femininity, and the surrounding community continues to reconfirm their place at the lowest of the local social hierarchy and not a part of their community. Locals stress that commercial sex is something 'from the outside,' that this form of immorality does not emanate from themselves, and a strict insider-outsider division is upheld. By doing so, people in Sabang aim to protect themselves both morally and financially.

Contrary to my first impression, commercial sex is very much locally discussed, contested, approved, and negotiated in Sabang. Sabang's population both resist a designation as a Little Ermita and struggle to find ways of protecting their morality. The continuing efforts invested in containing immorality also illustrate the potential threat that commercial sex may pose to one's sense of self-identity and sense of home.

The view that the business of sex has become an everyday feature has discouraged people from taking actions that would harm the sexscape. However, the Lewd Shows Ordinance was an attempt to close the go-go bars. Although some people in Sabang agreed with it, the Lewd Shows Ordinance was a proposal put forth by people from other *barangays*, not Sabang. It proved to mainly seek to protect the 'innocent' population, without taking into account the actual agents in the sexscape, the often poorest strata of the Filipino population and the foreign men. The bar girls may have low social status, but everyone in Sabang knows how important they are for the local economy.

Sabang's newly found position of influence in municipal politics, as

shown by the debates on the Lewd Shows Ordinance, is an issue I return to in the following chapter, but then in the context of questions regarding the environment, resources, and entitlement.

6. Conflicting Claims to Ownership and Resources

Introduction

The dependency on international tourists who come to Sabang for their vacations is on most locals' minds, and there are many different opinions about how development should continue. Sabang's tourism develops in an active political environment, and tourism is a topic of discussion in the daily lives of a vast majority of my informants. Locals, Filipinos and foreigners alike, have a multitude of ideas, opinions, arguments, and experiences of tourism's consequences so far. They also have a wide range of views of its future trajectory. Although most inhabitants I talked to agreed that tourism is essential for future development, there is no consensus on which paths to take.

The land formerly used for housing and subsistence farming is now a highly valued commodity in the tourism market. Sabang's involvement in tourism was followed by a shift in patterns of land usage and ownership, a development facilitated towards control of land and a demand for collaboration between family units in order to house the larger enterprises. Physically, Sabang was transformed to fit the new needs of the tourism industry, and people have given up their previous housing locations for tourism enterprises. Tourism has led to a shift in the demand for available land areas. Land became valuable through intensified commercial exploitation of primarily coastal land for constructing tourism facilities such as resorts, restaurants, bars, and diving shops. In combination with differing and sometime conflicting views of land entitlement, the Filipino locals fear losing control over their ownership of Sabang. How do people live in an environment where traditional control over resources, be they financial, symbolic or political, is undergoing change?

The Haves and the Have Nots

The older generations of local Filipinos collectively describe Sabang before tourism as a small fishing village where they all struggled to make ends meet. The few families that lived there perhaps owned the land, but they could not capitalize upon it but rather used it for housing and small-scale farming. Although my informants emphasized shared poverty among the locals, in some interviews I got some insight into social stratification. Feliciana, an elderly local woman who now lives a life of relative affluence, told me about the hardships she experienced before tourism, but she also acknowledged that since her husband worked as a police officer, thus had a steady monetary income, and that he was a member of the *Barangay* Council, they could manage their family of nine children, two of whom died at an early age. Feliciana's narrative gives indication of some pre-tourism socio-economic differences among the locals, but even so all informants talk about poverty and need when remembering their lives in Sabang before the development of tourism.

For local Filipinos who have been able to gain from the tourism sector their entitlements to land has been central. This had enabled them to develop their businesses apace with the increase in tourist demands. But, most Filipino locals owned some land, so land ownership alone does not automatically entail any ability to gain from it. An essential factor for the success of the locals seem to be their involvement in the first phases of development (1980–2000), which initially was slow and gradual, which enabled them to expand their businesses as their incomes increased. For those who did not partake in the early development, because they lacked initial capital to invest, had other businesses, or didn't realize the potential in tourism, it later on became more difficult to establish a business. The initial costs of opening an enterprise became more demanding, and prices of land or rent of land at locations attractive for tourism related businesses increased. Thus, tourism development has not enabled all members of the community to 'make it.' Some have done so while others have been able to tap into the promises proposed by the new economy. The stories of Rafael and Lilibeth illuminate how even the category of 'locals with pre-tourism ties to Sabang' is one with internal differences.

The municipal political arena has throughout history been out of

reach for Sabang's population, with one notable exception: Rafael. Rafael, a local man in his 60s, whom I also write about in Chapter 5, *Living in a Sex Tourism Town*, came from one of the local families who had no wealth or prominence before the development of tourism. Like most of my informants of the older generations, Rafael described his childhood in terms of poverty. He and his family, however, owned land in what would later become the central areas of Sabang. By quickly realizing the potential prospects in commercial sex, he opened the first go-go bar in Sabang in the 1980s. Several go-go bars were subsequently opened on his and his family's land. He was successful in his trade, and later he could resign from direct involvement to become a 'mere' land-owner, living off the leases of the land he owned. Rafael is an example of how one individual could go from poverty to wealth through tourism. And although he did not belong to a local prominent pre-tourism family, he was able to reach high positions in the local political and hierarchical system: he first became the *Barangay* Captain (the highest position in *barangay* politics) and then could move on to the municipal government, where he was the first member of the Municipal Council originating from Sabang. It is generally assumed by my informants that his monetary gain directly enabled his gain of political power: the wealth he acquired through the go-go bar resulted in his ability to gain local prestige, and to buy votes. For Rafael access to land and commercial sex translated into political power. Land ownership and the initiative to use it economically successfully played a major part in his success story, but he also maintained this position by being a respected but also feared leader of Sabang, having both charisma and will to hold a powerful position.

Lilibeth, on the other hand, had not been as successful. Lilibeth was a woman in her 60s belonging to one of the local families, and she said her and her husband had sold the bulk of her land in earlier days of need, although she didn't specify when. "We sold it very cheap! 250 000 pesos [USD 50 000] only, that's now worth 8 million [USD 160 000]. Crazy." Lilibeth pointed towards the resort that her neighbors, another one of the old local families, now owned on what used to be her family's land. Lilibeth and her husband separated, and while he moved to the United States, she remained in Sabang, supporting their eight children. The children all moved abroad later, and now she lives with one of her daughters-in-law in

a small house in the corner of her family's former land lot. Lilibeth's life has taken many turns. She has moved away from Sabang on several occasions, spent time abroad – once she lived with a boyfriend in Germany. But she always moved back to Sabang since that is where her family was from. In hindsight, she deeply regrets selling the land: all she could do now was to look at the resort on her former property and imagine what her life would have been like if she had held on to the land instead of selling it. Lilibeth said that she had passed up her opportunities of gaining wealth. Instead of living in comfort like many of the other members of her generation, she now struggles financially with a small-scale tour business, yielding only a modest and insecure income.

Postcolonial tourism studies suggest that one way of overcoming the common host-guest divide is by giving voice to the people previously silenced in tourism, namely the locals (Amoamo 2011; Aitchison 2001). However, it is not clear cut who the 'subaltern' or 'silenced' would be in Sabang. While the terms generally could refer to racialized Filipinos in postcolonial Philippines, they should, I believe, be more precisely formulated and not encompass all local Filipinos. The local Filipinos who have 'made it' often hold a stronger position in local society than some expats, since expats are excluded (as well as uninterested) from local political hierarchies. In Sabang has the possibilities of accessing the potential promises of tourism been uneven.

Nobody was prepared for the scale and pace of tourism development that subsequently took place, and nobody could foresee how valuable land areas earlier deemed as having low value, as they were impossible to cultivate, would become, such as shore line or hillside areas. Lilibeth's story exemplifies how not all locals have been able to tap into the gains of tourism, but also how her life has been thoroughly translocal. Through desperate need for an income in early tourism development she was forced to give up what eventually would be a highly valued commodity in Sabang: land. A majority of the recent migrants have come to Sabang as poor and have lacked the financial capabilities of acquiring land or securing land leases; they tend to be employed in the tourism sector, with jobs such as housemaids or boatmen, or they work as beach vendors rather than owning businesses. Land ownership, strong and favorable kinship ties, access to sources of influence are often put forward as central explanations for

Filipino locals' success in tourism, which also means that: "It is difficult to prosper in the domestic economy of Sabang if you are an 'outsider', as familial connections control access to capital and opportunity" (Wiss 2005: 34). For some locals, these requirements were perhaps initially fulfilled, but through what later would be revealed as unfortunate choices at the wrong time, they have missed out on the opportunities their fellow inhabitants were able to take. For non-local Filipinos, Sabang's more profitable parts of tourism economy proved to be difficult to penetrate. Financially strong foreigners could, on the other hand, gain access to control of land, which became a controversial issue.

Changing Patterns of Control of Land

The land itself in Sabang is mainly legally owned by members of a few extended local families, who, as I was told by members of these families, had secured ownership of land before tourism development and in-migration. Land shortage, however, has become an acute problem curtailing the potential for future expansion of the tourism sector. There has been a re-identification of land. Beach lots were formerly not suitable for cultivation, but are now highly prized areas as they are of high value in the new tourism economy. The demand for land is greater than the availability, and the tourism sector has increasingly spread outward and upward, claiming areas previously considered unattractive for habitation or cultivation. Today buildings are erected along the steep mountainside, and Sabang's silhouette is rising. The constant expansion of concrete constructions for housing and resorts gives Sabang an impression of being crowded, with little space left untouched and unutilized. Bilateral kinship and equal inheritance among siblings, together with higher value of the land has resulted in a process of splitting the land lots among siblings when inherited, rather than their jointly managing them. This is particularly prominent in the central areas of Sabang, where land lots tend to be on the smallish side. However, recently the trend towards running larger enterprises, such as larger-sized resorts, has again begun to require cooperation within the extended families, as one nuclear family or family member rarely holds land lots large enough for major constructions. This is perhaps most pro-

nounced with the construction of Korean resorts, a subject I return to in the last chapter.

My Filipino informants reported that if one owns land, then leasing land to a foreigner is a convenient alternative source of income, in particular if one does not have the capital, skills, inclination or ability to develop a tourism establishment on one's own. In regards to foreigners' possibilities of owning commercial enterprises in the country, the Philippine Republic Act No. 7042 (1991), also known as the "Foreign Investments Act" (FIA) limits foreign equity to 40%, in practice meaning that any establishment ought to be at least 60% owned by Filipinos (Javier 2006: 118ff, Republic Act No. 7042).¹ Foreigners wanting to set up a business of any sort either has to register the enterprise in the name of their spouses, if married to a Filipino citizen, or to form a corporation where at least 60% of the members of the corporation are Filipinos. Furthermore, foreigners are in similar manner restricted from legally owning land in the Philippines, though they may own physical structures, such as houses and apartments. Land and numerous establishments are clearly owned and run by foreigners, though this is not evident in the municipal business indexes as the businesses are registered in the name of their wives or girlfriends or corporations.² Expats who have married locally tend to access the wife's and her family's land lots for their businesses, while expats whose Filipina wives or girlfriends are non-local often have chosen the form of a corporation. In the latter case, the expat often involves her relatives to 'sign the papers' in order to form the corporation. With the possible exception of a spouse or a girlfriend, these individuals are rarely active owners or involved in the running of the business itself, but rather merely provide the necessary signatures.³

The timeframe for the leases varies from 10 to 40 years, often 20 to

1 The Foreign Investment Act has been revised on numerous occasions (see Javier 2006, chapter 10).

2 No establishments in Sabang are to my knowledge formally controlled by a female foreigner.

3 There are also rumors of paying a monthly 'salary' of up to 10000 pesos per month (USD 200) to each of the Filipino members of a corporation, in exchange for allowing their names to be used in the legal work. This practice is not overt, however, and only talked about in hushed tones, and this kind of gossip was mostly directed towards the newest expats, the Korean ones.

30 years, which explains the sense of loss of control over land common among Filipino locals. The Filipino locals may formally own the land, but have little control over it since many foreigners now in practice 'own' the land through long-term leases. The prices of the leases have increased tremendously throughout the years. Michael, an American expat, was one of the first expats to settle in Sabang. He had worked in Thailand for several years and had decided to spend his vacation in the Philippines, rather than go back to the United States. He found Sabang to be a quaint little place, and the place where he met his future wife. Michael told me that he leased his lot for 100 pesos (USD 2) per month. He leased the land from one of his in-laws and the price settled upon, and fixed, in the early 1980s. Twenty years later the cost of a similar-sized lot, though at a more favorable location was 25 000 pesos (USD 500) per month. For a comparison, in the mid-2000s a high school teacher earned about 11 000 (USD 220) pesos per month, so the income from the 25 000-peso lease was substantial.

Foreign men are sometimes assumed, by Filipinos as well as Philippine tourism scholars, to marry locally in order to gain ownership of land, using Filipinas as "dummies" (Bersales 1999: 226; Chant & McIlwaine 1995: 218, note 8). The underlying assumption is that little regard is paid to the individual woman, who is assumed to be forced into a marriage out of poverty and need. While this may be the case in some instances, the expats in Sabang tend to contest this prejudice, arguing that it is more complicated to get access to land through marriage than other options available to them. Jakob, a Swedish expat, believed that it does happen, that men marry to get access to land, but that it is not very common. Jakob said: "Why would anyone go through the hassle of marrying to get land? Here in the Philippines you marry for life." Although Jakob says there might be some instances where men marry Filipinas for citizenship, he continues: "You have to convert to Catholicism, pay for the wedding, deal with the whole family, and be with her for the rest of your life. Why would you do that when there are other ways to get land? It's much easier to form a corporation." Although there is in practice the alternative of separating, Jakob's statement illustrates a common attitude amongst foreigners: that it is easier to form a corporation to get access to land than to marry a Filipina if you are interested in setting up a business in the country.

Some expats described their dependency of their wives and girlfriends.

I was told several times what happened to one expat when he and his local Filipina wife decided to separate. The couple reportedly disagreed on who should take over the pub they owned. The paperwork of the pub was written in the wife's name, while the husband had in practice it had been running the bar, the expats told me. When the couple went their separate ways, the wife took over the pub, a decision which the husband objected to. The wife, I was told, had the formal rights to their business, while the husband had access to important informal networks. The expat community in Sabang is a rather tight-knit one, and most expats are familiar with each other, and this particular conflict had been a topic of their discussions for a while. In the end most expats sided with their fellow foreigner, and the expats decided not to patronize the pub in question any more, as a show of solidarity. And for a long time I spotted very few foreign customers at the pub in question. The wife then faced problems running the pub, as she had lost many of its key customers. After some time, however, new customers found their way to the pub, and she managed go on with her business. The ex-husband, on the other hand, chose to move away from Sabang. In this case the woman was local and had the knowledge and ability to take over the businesses. The expats are usually the ones with the experience, finances, know-how, and customer contacts required to continue running the businesses, in particular if the wife is non-local and thus often lacking a support system in the form of family ties.

Filipino migrants and less fortunate locals have had difficulty in penetrating this fairly closed circuit of control and ownership over land. Arnel, a Filipino man in his late 20s, came from one of the poorer families of Sabang who did not own any land. Instead Arnel had leased a lot in central Sabang and built up a successful business, a popular restaurant serving Western and Filipino food. At the time of our interview there was only two years left on his lease: "I hear that the owner would like to get it back. I don't know if I can make another extension of the lease. If possible, I would like to continue. Because if I don't have anything here in Sabang, I must to find some other place to earn my own living." If Arnel could not get an extension of his lease: "Then I can't stay in Sabang, even if I would like to. It's really hard for me." It was difficult for Arnel to come to terms with the thought that he would lose almost everything: "You can take all the things that you can move; those are yours. But all the things that you

built there... are for the owner of the land. That is in the contract. They own it then, after that the contract is finished.”

Arnel experienced the vulnerability of leasing land, and risking losing the business he had worked hard to build up. His fears came true, and after our interview his lease was not prolonged. The restaurant was torn down and a resort was built in its place by new tenants. Arnel was reportedly involved in another tourism-related venture in White Beach instead. Land owners have the option of strategically leasing their land lots, to choose what kind of project or establishment is to be developed on their land by allowing their lots to be leased to individuals with that project in mind. Foreigners are generally perceived to be wealthy by the Filipino locals; they have also preferred foreign lessees, not only because they have been able to ask for a higher lease but also because it was thought that the foreigners would invest in more valuable constructions that would accrue to them when the lease was ended. However, at times Filipinos do manage to lease land – but then so under different conditions than foreigners. Arnel’s lease, for example, was only for ten years, much shorter than foreigners’ leases.

“Maybe the Time Will Come When They Live Here and Not Us”

The increasing number of foreigners starting to form corporations and acquiring long-term leases has stirred up questions regarding who is entitled to Sabang – who *really* controls Sabang and who *ought* to. There is a fear among local Filipinos that control over land is being transferred to foreigners, and that they, as Sabang’s rightful owners, are being pushed aside. The land owners choose to lease out their land rather than living on it themselves. This was often formulated to me as something done out of necessity, that they needed the income that leasing out land would generate. The issue of control of land is sensitive one. Many locals, Filipinos, including the long-term expats, express hesitation about a transfer of control over land from the native Sabang families to the increasing number of foreigners who choose to settle in Sabang.

There is a sense of worry amongst locals that outsiders are taking over their village. As Vera, an elderly woman from one of the more af-

fluent families in Sabang, put it: “They keep on building. The tourists [foreigners], they rent the land and maybe the time will come when they live here and not us. All the land owners sell [lease] their lands or they rent it to foreigners and then there’s nothing left for the Filipinos.” Vera’s quote illustrates how ‘sell’ and ‘lease’ are often used interchangeably in daily speech. As leases tend to span over decades, the sentiments attached to leasing one’s land to foreigners is by locals seen as being similar to those of permanently selling the land. Either way, the seller/leaser loses control over the land for a significant period of time, and the owners will have no control over what the land will be used for. It is only when the lease expires that the owner takes over the buildings erected on the land lot.

The trend towards larger and larger establishments, requiring larger and larger initial investments, poses a problem for many local Filipinos. To be viable in the tourism business today you often need to compete with foreigners. As Feliciano, a local woman, said: “Today, it’s easier for a foreigner because they have ‘big money.’ Filipinos can’t afford to buy compared to foreigners. The people here, they can’t afford that.” Some have done as Lilibeth did, sold or leased their land lots earlier on, and now cannot afford to buy or lease. A majority of the local Filipino population do not own large land areas, or land in attractive sites, and many have already leased their land to foreigners. Also, the prices of land and leases have risen tremendously, making it difficult for locals to either buy or lease land. To put the issue of leases succinctly: not all Filipino locals are now land owners, but land owners are Filipino locals. But land owners do not always have control over their properties, as they can be on long-term leases. There is a fear among Filipino locals that they will not be able to keep up with developments, since the previous process of gradually developing one’s business is being replaced by establishing businesses of a larger scale from the outset.

The Filipino locals who have sold or leased their land lots earlier in the development process tell about the desperate needs for an income they faced, and often talk about their naiveté, having been unable to foresee the enormous potential tourism would entail, as exemplified by the regrets expressed by Lilibeth earlier. Those I talked to who considered leasing their land to foreigners said they did so primarily because of old age, since it would offer them financial opportunities for retirement, in particular in

cases when all the children have moved elsewhere and there is nobody left to take care of the businesses. They also felt that they've done their share of hard work in their lives, and now look forward to a less hectic lifestyle, financed by the leases.

As in most seaside tourist sites, the most popular land areas are the ones facing the ocean, and, with very few exceptions, private housings along the beach have been replaced by tourist establishments. Residents, both Filipino and expat, have chosen to move up the hillside and, increasingly, also to neighboring *barangays*.⁴ Jun, himself a local Filipino, also identifies a dual process of increased development and of locals as having been pushed away from Sabang: "The positive effect, of course, the ongoing development of the community peoples' properties, types of living, and situations of the family are developing and really progressing: that's positive. But it's also a problem for the native people of Sabang, that is; the real property owners. They have fled out into the higher areas, rather than to stay on their properties." A sense of Sabang becoming less 'home' for the original locals, and more a place for outsiders was often aired by Filipino locals.

In our encounters and interviews, Jun often returned to what he perceived a lack of governance in regards to land. The Filipino locals are the rightful owners, Jun explained to me, but they are losing control over it. The issue of control of land is often intertwined with perceptions of economic morality, the work ethic, social responsibilities, and ownership. The ones who lease the land risk are viewed by those who have not leased their land as lazy, unpatriotic, and merely wanting 'easy money,' prioritizing comfortable living, and deviating from the norm dictating hard work, endurance, and modesty. Vera, a local woman, explains the connection between morality and land ownership as: "I think, maybe it's because the tourists [foreigners] are allowed to rent the land and it gets so easy for the landowner to just receive the money. Maybe they want an easy life, they just receive the money."

Vera points to an issue that was sensitive among my Filipino informants. Filipino land owners who have maintained ownership of their

⁴ Mangyans have no standing to claim ownership of land. Although identified as the original inhabitants of Mindoro, they can't claim ancestral land rights in Sabang, or to other beach areas in the community.

properties are particularly concerned about others' decisions to lease their lands to foreigners. Renata, a local woman, is worried about the future of her business, and for the future generation: "Maybe my business will decline because there's so many foreign competitors. The foreigners are defeating the Filipinos, just like you already have heard about all the land they have bought. But, I will never sell my lot. What would happen to my children, and my grandchildren?"

What can be discerned in Vera's words is that there is a sense of resentment expressed by those who have been able to hold on to their land lots towards those who have sold or leased their lands to outsiders. Manuel, who belongs to one of the prominent families in Sabang who have maintained ownership of their land, voices frustration with his fellow locals who have chosen to sell or lease their land lots, and he fears that the Filipino locals are losing control of the land: "Well, it is true that there could be some danger, that the time will come when the ownership of the majority of the resorts here will be in foreigners' hands. But, we cannot blame them; it's the Filipinos that are selling their interest due to economic hardships." Manuel went on to say: "But, it all depends on us. If we allow it, then it will happen. If we don't allow it, then it won't. By not selling your resorts, simple as that." There is a moral dimension in locals' narratives of land ownership and entitlement and a sense of worry over transformations in control and ownership over land. But as noted earlier, taking part of the new market that tourism has offered has been unequal.

Two Cases of Entitlement Disputes

There are rivaling notions about the use of space, and in a context where these issues are already sensitive, these at times leads to conflicting claims of ownership and entitlement. Related questions of what is considered public property and who has the right to use it and how are also sources of conflicts, in particular between Filipinos and foreigners. Ideas and practices of differences are manifested in entitlement issues, for example in ideas of individualistic and collective ownership and responsibilities. Not only are land ownership and entitlement legally and practically complicated issues, they are also surrounded by different ideas of ownership and

entitlements. I will exemplify this with two cases that many of my informants often referred to when explaining to me their views of land, rights, and responsibilities: a conflict over a pier and questions of Right of Way. Both conflicts reveal deep seated ideas of differences between primarily Filipinos and foreigners in regards to questions of ownership, but also of ideas of wealth, inequality, and social responsibility.

The shore has become busy, with numerous *bancas* and diving boats congesting the area closest to shore, and it is often difficult to find space big enough to fit the lateral floats that characterize the *bancas*. Throughout the day the respective diving shops transport their divers to and from diving sites in *bancas* and other types of boats. Commercial shipping lines also come in regularly to leave or take up passengers from Batangas (on Luzon, the main gateway to Sabang) or other *barangays*. With increased incomes, people have acquired private *bancas* for personal use or to be able to offer transportation to tourists for ‘island hopping.’ There have been no particular regulations on when, where, and how the *bancas* should anchor; they have done so whenever and wherever possible.

In the process of constructing one of the larger resorts, a pier was also built. This pier long constituted the only permanent pier in Sabang. Normally all *bancas* and other boats anchor along shore, which can be both tricky and risky, especially in harsh weather with strong winds and high waves, when it might be difficult to hold the *bancas* steady enough for loading and unloading passengers or goods. When the resort constructed the pier, made of rock, corals, and concrete, it was primarily intended for resort and diving-shop use, but when others realized the benefits of accessing a pier, as it made loading much easier, commercial shipping lines and private *bancas* began utilizing it. After some time, the owners of the resort complained that the traffic to ‘their’ pier impeded their intended use of it. Subsequently the resort owners enforced restrictions on the general use of the pier, a decision that was contested by local boat owners and shipping lines. The resort claimed ownership of the pier and therefore the also right to decide on its use, since they had built it, financed it, and are responsible for maintaining the pier in order to facilitate diving and transportation of *their* customers.

The pier was long a source of conflict. Local Filipinos claimed that the pier should be available to everybody, as it is built out in the water –

who owns the ocean? – they asked. The foreign owner of resort saw the pier as private property. This conflict also stirred up a divide between the Filipinos' and foreigners' relations to ownership. In local Filipino's eyes, areas such as roads, the beach, and the ocean are generally viewed as being for everybody's use, and excluding others from the use of such a much-needed construction such as a pier was deemed inconsistent with local norms of cooperation. A concern in the eyes of the Filipinos was also the foreigners' lack of respect for Filipino social responsibilities. Foreigners are often by default identified as wealthier than Filipinos and are thus expected to take responsibility of their privileged position and provide for the whole of the community. When they fail to do so foreigners are deemed egotistical. An employee at the resort told me that the resort had been considering opening the piers for the use of others, but demanded in return financial contributions for maintenance. This idea was not realized in the end, and the expat I talked to argued it was because Filipinos had refused to pay. Foreigners I talked to on the issues, and in particular expats, on the other hand, tended to interpret the Filipinos wish to access the pier as greed, arguing that "Filipinos just want the benefits but pay nothing." They considered the pier to be private property. The expats I talked to about the issue tended to empathize with the resort owners regarding the question of ownership of the pier.

Aside from differing views of private and public ownership, another issue that emerges from this case is expectations regarding the state. Foreigners tend to expect the state to provide facilities like a common pier. Expats told me that the lack of a communal pier was a sign of a weak government that was incapable of meeting the needs of the citizens. There was thus a conflict between the foreign-owned resort and the local Filipino population. In the end the resort closed the pier for outsiders' use, a decision that many of my Filipino informants saw as unfair.

In 2010 the construction of a communal pier was initiated, partly funded by a new fee imposed on arriving tourists. The process was slow and often interrupted, and it was surrounded by rumors of corruption and many were skeptical of its ever being finished – which it eventually was. Following the construction of a public pier, the issue of ownership and responsibility was again the topic of debates. Who should be in charge of constructing it and who should take the responsibility for

running and maintaining it? The individuals using the pier, the *barangay*, or the municipality? These issues were later on at least partially resolved by charging a 30 peso fee (little more than half a USD) for all passengers; it was thus a fee that affected Filipinos and foreigners alike, which my informants considered fair.



Sabang's new pier became a source of pride as well as debate.

Another example illuminating conflicts arising from conflicting views of land ownership is that of Right of Way. The Right of Way is legally stated nationally in Republic Act no. 386 (1949), and aims to ensure the existence of passageways to and from primarily roads and railways. In Sabang, this is interpreted to allow people to pass on the edges of other's properties if needed. Since land is principally privately owned, and as there is a lack of planned infrastructure, Sabang is intersected by narrow pathways that function as access ways. These pathways are located on private property. Conflicts arise when individual land owners do not allow people to pass over their land, and in the Filipino perspective this mainly occurs with foreign control over land, again as a result of differing positions regarding communal and private ownership and responsibilities. Jun told me: "This is what I experienced when it comes to this Right of Way. My god! There was a foreigner that when he bought a [neighboring] lot he would not give me a Right of Way [an access way for Jun to reach his house by car]. Most of them [foreigners] don't give a Right of Way." In

Jun's experience foreigners are protective of their land lots: "What they are explaining is this: 'This is the lot *I* had bought and *I* have to use *my* lot, the whole lot.' I have the right to put a cover or a fence on that lot.' Although Right of Way is stipulated in the local rules and regulations, they don't believe that this Right of Way is already in the plan [required when purchasing a land lot or acquiring a building permit]. Most of them, they don't believe that. They just say: 'That's still *my* property.'"

Jun had firsthand experience of such a conflict when he and his foreign neighbor couldn't come to an agreement about the neighbor letting Jun use part of the neighbor's property to access Jun's house: "So I brought him to court," Jun said. Jun and his neighbor eventually settled the issue privately, and his neighbor sacrificed a piece of his land for their common use as a driveway. Jun conveys a widespread sentiment among Filipinos; that foreigners tend to be inconsiderate towards others by putting up fences, with little regard to neighbors' wishes and needs. As the morally entitled 'proper' owners of the land, Filipinos see it as offensive for an outsider to claim the right to act as the expat Jun described. By refusing to align with the common practice of Right of Way, the expat in this case is seen as another example of how the foreigners tend to disrespect local customs and local values. Stories and sentiments such as the one expressed by Jun are fairly commonplace, and they center on widespread notions of cultural differences in regards to land ownership. The notions of differences are accentuated when conflicts arise, and differences are articulated through questions of ownership of and responsibility for land. In the polarization of images of the Self and the Other, the construction of differences between the collectivistic Filipino and the individualistic Foreigner are reiterated. For example, it was explained to me that by Filipino resort owners that they also fenced in their establishments to protect and respect tourists' need for privacy by keeping vendors out. The fencing was thus formulated as a show of respect and empathy towards the need of the tourists, advocating the Filipino ideal of *pakikisama* (to get along).

The issues of both the pier and Right of Way exemplify conflicts between different views of communal and private ownership, responsibilities and social behavior and the difficulties in reaching an agreement in a situation where there's a lot at stake, financially and culturally. The examples serve as an illustration that there is a variety of ideas for the use

of space in one and the same tourism town, and that they are not always in agreement.

Tourism and the Value of the Environment

Kurt, the vocal German expat who was an owner of a smaller resort, was critical of how local tourism development has been handled. He fears that eventually tourists will become discouraged from visiting Sabang. Kurt told me: “While it may initially look very good to have large sums of foreign investment, in the long run you have to look at the sustainable development. When you’re looking at the impact you’re getting from putting up large hotels on this area where you have zero provisions for sewage and so on and so forth... It may be a boom but in the long run you’re actually shooting yourselves in the foot because sooner or later you’ll have overdevelopment and the tourists will simply go elsewhere.” I asked him if he could see this happening in Sabang, that tourists go somewhere else due to overdevelopment. Kurt then said: “Yeah. Of course you can, you can follow this kind of thing pretty much all over the world. In Asia it’s the same: Wherever you get overdevelopment of a tourist area... People were simply fed up with it. It’s a short-term boom, it’s like a straw fire, you know? Burns very bright and then you’d overly developed and people don’t find what they came here for in the first place.”

People in Sabang are well aware of the significance of a sustainable ecological environment for a sustainable tourism industry, primarily in form of clean beaches and diving sites and the absence of visible garbage. In identifying the root of the problems Filipinos and foreigners tend to formulate responsibility in terms of cultural differences. However, failure to control the development is mainly collectively attributed to the local government. Out of this frustration several NGOs have been established, in the process also challenging the conventional power structure. In this dynamic political environment, a new awareness of the significance of environmental protection has been popularized. There is great pressure on land to be turned into commercial tourism enterprises. There is also great pressure on the local ecology. Tourism development has led to an ever-increasing number of people visiting, living, and working in Sabang,

followed by increasing traffic on land and sea, garbage and household waste, and usage of water and electricity. People often complain how busy, dirty, and noisy Sabang has become. As Kurt's quote reveals, people also fear that this will soon have a negative effect on tourism.



*Pollution from wastewater
that runs out into the ocean.*

There are thus several needs identified that cause ambivalence. On the one hand, there is a strong sense of tourism dependency and a drive towards continuing to develop and expand tourism. On the other hand, there are ambitions to take charge of development and shape it in accordance with ideas of sustainability. Although my informants were grappling with tourism development, dependency, and reshaping the tourism scene so that it will have less adverse effects on natural and social environment, there was no consensus on how to go about it.

A principal agent in instigating a new local environmentalist discourse in the municipality and to propound issues of environmental preservation and the threat to the tourism industry and livelihoods it poses has been

the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) – Philippines. The WWF set up a temporary office in Puerto Galera in the mid-2000s, to undertake and support research on the local flora and fauna, and particularly the marine life. The objective of the WWF was also to support the local government by assisting the Municipal Council in authoring municipal ordinances, assessing needs, and proposing actions. Several reports were published pointing out the fragility of Puerto Galera’s ecology, exposing the condition of marine and land-based biodiversity at risk of deterioration, and the reports also identified the local environment as in dire need of preservative action (PEMSEA 2008, 2009; WWF 2005). These reports aroused local interest for issues of environmental protection. In one municipal ordinance it was stated that: “the growing coastal population as well as the burgeoning tourism and other economic activities have intensified the risks of environmental degradation, destruction of habitats and deterioration of water quality” (M.O. 06-03). Several municipal ordinances were passed with the intention of preserve the environment and recognizing the central role it plays for the future development of the tourism industry, such as one creating a special board responsible for the conservation of coastal resources (M.O. 04-14) and declaring parts of the coast a Marine Protected Area (MPA), demanding the local government’s control and regulation of marine activities such as fishing and scuba diving and promoting ecotourism (M.O. 05-10).

When identifying causes of the degradation of the ecological environment, a polarization of Filipinos and foreigners once again became apparent. My Filipino informants tended to identify tourists’ consumption as a primary source for environmental degradation. The affluence and holiday indulgence of the tourists has shaped a view of foreigners as resource demanding and environmentally taxing. When debating environmental issues, the argument that “tourists use one roll of toilet paper a day” became commonplace, illustrating a view of the tourists as excessive consumers. It’s not only the amount of garbage or beer bottles the tourists leave behind, but also their travel around in privately hired *bancas* and *jeepneys*, and the fact that their bed sheets are often changed and washed, and so forth. In a WWF report it was similarly argued that tourism takes its toll on the municipality by the tourists’ use of roads, sewage, garbage, water, electricity, but “they pay no taxes” (WWF 2005: 20), indicating a

sense of unfairness that tourists may utilize the general infrastructure but not directly contributing to its construction and maintenance. Furthermore, the local Filipinos also make the association between increased tourism with increased problems with pollution, having witnessed the two developments concurrently.

My foreign informants, on their hand, often claim that Filipinos lack the knowledge and commitment to environmental care, for example by having not having a developed manner of collecting garbage, or that Filipinos cut down trees and plants to give way to buildings for commercial use, without consideration of future sustainability. A former Swedish expat, Fredrik, said on his visit back to Sabang that: “There is no central budget,” and Fredrik attributed this to Filipino inability or lack of knowledge of how to maintain public responsibilities: “They have no plans for the future. They haven’t learned that in the two generations of tourism growth. There are big changes when there’s big money, but it’s still an undeveloped society, they have not learned to work together.” It should be noted that there are rules and regulations in place that the members of the barangay council are required to consider before approving any new constructions. It is generally acknowledged, however, that one can bribe the members of the *Barangay* Council to approve of constructions not complying with the formal requirements. Foreign informants tend to interpret this to a lack of Filipino commitment and even *ability* to make long term plans, arguing that Filipinos are focusing on the short-term gains. Filipinos are often depicted by foreigners as uneducated, oblivious to knowing how to preserve the coral reefs as demonstrated by a practice of anchoring on the coral reef wherever convenient rather than at fixed buoys – which, it should be noted, is not universally practiced by expats either.

The local government has had difficulty in both attending to the new needs of the community brought by the expansion of the tourism industry and gaining people’s trust in the government’s capability to properly manage the municipality. The popular concern for the deterioration of the environment, and its negative effect on the tourism industry resulted in a series of attempts to formulate new strategies to rectify the problems caused by previous negligent enforcement of local and national laws and regulations directed at maintaining social and environmental sustainability. As mentioned in Chapter 2, *Becoming a Tourist Town*, for example, structures

have been erected that disregarded national law regarding distance from shoreline, household waste, and wastewater is improperly handled. This has been acknowledged as negative, not only for the environment, but also in effect for tourism.

New Sources of Influence

Power, economics, and politics in relation to tourism development might be the most researched areas in tourism studies across the disciplines, including tourism anthropology (Britton 1982; M.C. Hall 1994; Macleod & Carrier 2010; Richter 1989; M.K. Smith & Robinson 2006). This is not surprising, given that tourism development has the potential to disrupt established structures of power and influence. Tourism and the economy it brings incur substantial changes in the countries or communities where it develops. In Puerto Galera and Sabang, tourism has ignited new political debates and opened new platforms for change.

At first glance, Puerto Galera is no exception from any schematic depiction of Philippine local and national politics, where representation in political local leadership has largely remained in the hands of a small number of elite families. Puerto Galera as a whole is governed by a limited number of powerful families, originating predominantly from central *barangays*. Although Sabang, together with the tourist site White Beach in *barangay* San Isidro, is of central value to the economy of the municipality, the municipality continues to be officially governed by its traditional elites. Historically Sabang has been a marginalized *barangay*, having little influence beyond *barangay* politics, with the exception of Rafael, who had managed to enter municipal politics.

Today there are also alternative channels through which one can reach powerful positions without entering the conventional political arena, and there are new actors who have the power to dictate local developments. Tourism has opened new platforms for organization, and this has caused some concern among the traditionally powerful families as. Several new actors have cropped up in the political arena, in form of local interest groups, NGOs, and international aid foundations, organizations which have become increasingly involved in local discussions and development

projects, primarily directed at environmental preservation. It should be clarified that Sabang has been the focus of this emerging environmental discourse in a manner that none of the other 12 *barangays* in the municipality has. This does not mean that other *barangays* have not experienced environmental degradation, but that the significance of keeping Sabang 'clean and green' is a municipal priority: Sabang's tourism sector is of importance not only for Sabang's inhabitants but also for the municipality as a whole. *Barangay* Sabang has become a factor in municipal politics, thus influencing politics in all of the 13 *barangays* that make up the municipality of Puerto Galera.

The conflicts over control over resources engage several different sets of actors on different levels of social organization, from individuals in *barangay* Sabang to the municipal government and various NGOs active in the area. Local NGOs ('local' refers here to NGOs emanating from within the municipality) such as Tourism Sector Coordinating Association (TOSCA), the Puerto Galera Diving Association (PGDA), and the Concerned Citizens and Business Owners Association (CCBOA) are all local initiatives, and these NGOs together with the municipality have cooperated with several international agencies that have provided financial and technical support and have also been active in assessing the state of the local environment.

While the Puerto Galera Diving Association and the Tourism Sector Coordinating Association work throughout the municipality, the Concerned Citizens and Business Owners Association is constituted by business owners exclusively in Sabang. This Sabang-based NGO was formed out of frustration with the municipal and *barangay* governments' lack of ability to effectively deal with practical concerns that affect Sabang's tourism industry negatively. The work of this NGO is also aimed mainly at environmental issues, and it involves setting out and maintaining garbage cans throughout Sabang, as well as hiring janitors to clean up the beaches and clear them from flushed-up algae. They collect a monthly fee, ranging from a couple of hundred to over a thousand pesos (approximately USD 4–30) from the establishments in Sabang. Many locals, Filipinos and foreigners alike, thought this should be the municipality's responsibility, but found that this would not be realized as it was not a prioritized issue and also, it was assumed, a question of a lack of funding. Instead the

NGO was formed to deal with maintenance of the foremost the beaches. Other actors have also become prominent in the local environmentalist discourse, such as international NGOs, for example Sustainable Coastal Tourism in Asia – Philippines (SCOTIA), and Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA). These international organizations are offering technical assistance and support projects teaching locals about recycling and composting.



A local NGO provides garbage cans and cleans up algae from the beach in order to maintain Sabang's attractiveness.

The emergence of new means of organization has caused some concern in the conventional seats of power and influence. With increased influence and visibility in the municipality the family backgrounds of the members of Tourism Sector Coordinating Association (TOSCA) steering committee also came into question, and in the local newspaper an open letter to the NGO Tourism Sector Coordinating Association was published:

Now, the question is this, since you have a big role that you would like to take, as TOSCA, why is it that you didn't include the people who really come from Puerto Galera? Where are the grandchildren of Hilarion Axalan, Aguedo Cobarrubias, Pedro Delgado, of the Atienza, Suzara, Ilaga, Lopez and Cataquis? If you don't know these families, you're not from Puerto Galera. If you would

say that they didn't attend when you organized this, it seems that you don't have a wide study in the attitude and culture of the people from Puerto Galera. If your plan is to make TOSCA a prime mover of your plans for Puerto Galera. Think again. If you will not include those who really are from Puerto Galera, your plan will not be a success. It's not too late, please include them in your plan (PGF 2006 4: 6, Nov. 1–15: 4).⁵

This letter was written in Tagalog. The newspaper it was published in was primarily written in English with only a one page summary in Tagalog. This issue at hand, that of who has the historical entitlement to occupy positions of power, was apparently deemed to be a concern of Tagalog speakers only, thus effectively excluding tourists and expats from reading it. The anonymous author acknowledges the potential power of the NGO as an influential force in local politics and decision-making, and the letter expresses concern of the established powerful families' potential loss control. The issue then becomes who is entitled to control over tourism and its future development. The author makes references to several family names that constitute the core of the Puerto Galera traditional elite, whose members commonly hold the high-ranking positions in municipal politics. The author confirms and defends a position that local elites *ought* to continue holding high positions, also in new and potentially influential organizations. This letter can be viewed an expression of an ongoing schism between old and potentially emerging sources of influence. Tourism is seen as having the potential to disrupt established power structures, and the open letter illustrates how the old elite is seen, by the author at least, as the rightful rulers of the Municipality.

Sabang's Newfound Position of Power: Two Ordinances

With the intention of providing a mechanism to maintain and preserve the social and natural environment, several municipal ordinances were formulated. The two most controversial municipal ordinances were the Environmental Users Fee, also known as the EUF ordinance, and the One

⁵ Translated from Tagalog by Caren Ceniza Lopez.

Point of Entry ordinance. The discussions regarding these two ordinances were at times heated, revealing not only a precarious political climate but also the centrality of particularly Sabang's tourism scene in the municipality, as well as various views on how to best maintain it.

Since the early 2000s an idea of centralizing all incoming commercial seafaring vessels, roughly understood as *bancas* that charge passengers for transport, to the municipality to a single port had been discussed. In 2006 these discussions escalated and became one of the most controversial topics in local politics. A municipal ordinance, called the One Point of Entry ordinance was passed, requiring all commercial passenger liners to dock at the Balatero pier, located some 8 km by land from Sabang, thus banning the use of all other docking points (PGF 2006 4: 7, Nov. 16-30: 1). The people involved in the issue were mainly divided by residence and political affiliation. The main proponents of the One Point of Entry ordinance were the Mayor and his political party, together with inhabitants and business owners in *barangays* who do not have the opportunity to gain direct access to the tourism sector. Opponents were shipping line owners and representative of opposing political parties. The strongest critics were inhabitants and entrepreneurs in the tourism sites of White Beach and Sabang. The discussions of the ordinance took place at the several public hearings on the issue, in the local newspaper, on internet sites as well as in daily life. It was a popular topic and most people I met, Filipinos and foreigners, had strong opinions on the issue. The proponents argued that by making all commercial sea vessels dock at one single port, the marine environment would be protected from the effects of commercial seafaring, such as degradation of the coral reef from anchoring, pollution from the diesel-driven vessels, and motor and propeller noise. The negative environmental effects would be concentrated in one single point of entry to the Municipality, rather than many. An expected benefit was that the beaches would also become less crowded by *bancas* and become more accessible for tourism activities.

The inhabitants of Sabang were the harshest and the loudest critics of the ordinance, arguing that Sabang's tourism industry would decline drastically if it were to be enforced. The opponents argued that tourists would flee Sabang, because *bancas* would not go straight to the intended sites, and there would be extra transportation costs and increases in travel

time. The protests bore fruit, and the One Point of Entry ordinance was reformulated into a Two Point of Entry ordinance, allowing sea vessels to dock at Sabang in addition to Balatero Pier. This suggestion was immediately criticized for favoring Sabang, resulting in unfair exclusion of other *barangays* as potential points of entry. After another revision the ordinance was back to its original one point of entry state. However, in the end the project was abandoned, and vessels continued to dock at multiple sites in the municipality, that is, the places *bancas* usually dock throughout the municipality.

Another project that was heatedly debated in the mid-2000s was the proposed “Ordinance Establishing an Environmental Users’ Fee System in the Municipality of Puerto Galera, Mindoro Oriental” (M.O. 06-03). The ordinance became known as the EUF ordinance. The Environmental Users Fee ordinance proposed that all tourists were to pay a fee of 50 pesos (USD 1) upon arriving to Puerto Galera, to fund projects “that will ensure the protection, conservation and sustainable use of the natural environment” (M.O. 06-03). The collection of the fee was initiated roughly a year later, and by the end of 2010 the Environmental Users Fee ordinance had generated nearly a total of 13 million pesos (USD 260 000). The profit has been placed in local governmental funds, distributed to the *barangays* to be used at their discretion, and invested in projects primarily concerning waste management. This ordinance was somewhat less controversial since the idea of requiring tourists to pay more money was locally considered a good one, so the ordinance was passed and tourists started paying the EUF-fee.

The role of Sabang in municipal politics surfaced in the debates on how to best spend the income generated from the Environmental Users Fee. Before the exact income became clear, the general assumption was that the Environmental Users Fee would generate 50 million pesos (USD 1 million) yearly, on the unfounded and made-up assumption that Puerto Galera receives 1 million tourists a year. It turned out that the actual number of tourist arrivals was approximately 150 000 tourists yearly (PGIC 2010: 5). But with the initial kind of sum in mind grandiose plans were made, and first on the agenda was the construction of a sewage treatment plant in Sabang.⁶ The sewage treatment plant was the largest and most

⁶ Sometimes referred to as the sewage treatment plant (STP), Sabang Wastewater Treatment

criticized proposed projects to be financed by the fee. One report stated that the cost would be slightly over 100 million pesos (USD 20 million). Several assessments and feasibility studies were made, with thorough examinations of potential sites for the sewage treatment plant, present treatment of wastewater, cost of land purchase and construction of the plant, a construction corporation identified for the construction of the plant and calculations if and how the Environmental Users Fee could financially support the project (PEMSEA 2008, 2009; PGIC 2010). The sewage treatment plant was to be constructed in Sabang since Sabang's environment was identified as being most at risk. This proposal was controversial. Inhabitants from other *barangays* argued that Sabang was being given special treatment, and on a large scale at that. However, due to insufficient funding the project was laid to rest.

Both ordinances are examples of new attempts to take control over growth. However, the outcomes of these two debates were different. The controversies surrounding the One Point of Entry revolved around the power of the established political system, the new position of Sabang as an influential *barangay* and distrust of the municipal government's motives. These issues were also present in the other major debate, about the Environmental Users Fee. In this latter debate notions of municipal-wide dependency on Sabang's tourism and diverging ideas of economic and environmental responsibilities of Filipinos and foreigners became more pronounced.

The ordinances and the debates also illustrate the grand dreams locals have for the future and the potentialities and risks they see in further expansion of tourism. In the debates of the two ordinances, a variety of voices was heard and a lively political climate was revealed. In the debates Sabang's newfound prominent position was also evident, as Sabang's tourism is regarded as being of central importance to the whole of the municipality. This new role and source of income have resulted in conflicting claims of entitlement to land and environment emerged, and questions of the right to decide on the future development of tourism are not seen as an issue pertaining to Sabang alone. The ordinances also illustrate the difficulties involved in enforcing radical changes, how important Sabang is to the municipality as a whole, and how tourism dependency influences local

Plant (SWTP) or Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP).

politics: Sabang has a source of power that other *barangays* lack, perhaps with the exception of White Beach (or *barangay* San Isidro). The whole municipality is dependent on tourism, making the support of the inhabitants of Sabang for projects essential for any local tourism development projects.

Concluding Remarks

The allure of Sabang as an untroubled paradise-like site in the tropics is under threat. The locals are well aware of the significance of the significance of Sabang's appeal and ability to continue attracting foreign tourists. But managing control over tourism development is not an easy feat. Tourism is a highly charged matter since controlling tourism also means controlling the industry upon which the people of Sabang, as well as the municipality as a whole, are deeply dependent. There are underlying conflicts that go beyond the conventional local-versus-foreigner divide, between different groups of local Filipinos, as well as the broader categories of Filipinos and foreigners, conflicts that surface when attempting to identify responsibilities, problems, and solutions to the problems of a deteriorating sense of home, continuity, and the physical environment.

The discussions of Sabang's future development are embedded are increasingly intertwined with tourism development. Sabang is a politically active *barangay*, ridden with conflicts and heated debates over resources, however, as is common in tourist sites, these discussions rarely reach the tourists; they are held out of their view. While maintaining this outward image, there is also a sense of growth having spiraled out of control and things having changed too rapidly. These debates also show how the population of Sabang, and Filipinos in particular, are active in shaping their lives, and not merely victims of an outside force in the form of international demand for tourism. The deterioration of the environment is seen by many of my Filipino and foreign informants as a sign of lack of control over the development on behalf of the local government. Locals attempt to mitigate the perceived negative consequences of tourism development, including the effects it has had on land ownership and the environment, by forming NGOs.

However, local Filipinos expressed to me a sense of fear when they witness foreigners taking control over land that was previously controlled by local Filipinos. They were concerned that foreigners are encroaching on spheres of life that are considered as rightfully the domains of locals. The increased presence of foreigners is manifested not only in issues pertaining to ownership and entitlement but also through the formation of intimate relationships, when Filipinas marry Western men and decide to settle in Sabang. These transnational relationships will be discussed in the next chapter.

7. Transnational Relationships

Introduction

Tourism creates possibilities for new forms of intimate relationships, and one of the effects of local tourism development has been an increase in marriages between Filipinas and foreigners. These marriages have also been instrumental in the development of tourism, since through marriages, many tourism-related enterprises have been formed and thus contribute to the development process, while being intimately connected with the changes in Sabang.

The people represented in this chapter are all involved in transnational relationships in which the woman is a Filipina and a white man from a Western country.¹ The couples have thus chosen to settle in Sabang, rather than to reside in the country of the husband, which seems to be more common. This chapter examines transnational connections from the point of view of my informants, and how ambivalences of cross-cultural intimate relationships are experienced in a context where such relationships often are associated with commercial sex.

What happens when the transnational relationships are lived out in

¹ The terms 'Cross-Border Marriages' and 'Transnational Marriages' are often used interchangeably, but an attempt to clarify them has been made. The former is generally used when referring to marriages between partners who belong to different ethnic groups, but also in marriages that cross racial, class, national, and geographical divides. The focus is on structural factors creating political and financial gaps between the spouses (Constable 2005: 12-16). The concept 'cross border-marriage' is generally used to refer to the actual practice of crossing borders, be they national, cultural, economic, gendered, or racialized borders. The latter use of the term 'transnational marriage,' on the other hand, draws attention to international networks and "marriage-scapes." The literature on transnationalism focuses on "multidirectional flows of desire, people, ideas and objects across, between and beyond national boundaries" (Constable 2003a: 215f), rather than the borders crossed in marriage migration.

Sabang, in the home country and sometimes home community of the women? How are cultural identities and gender roles negotiated? How are transnational relationships linked to tourism? Does the fact that Sabang is a known sexscape factor into these negotiations? The anthropologists Nicole Constable researching 'mail-order brides' between Chinese and Philippine women and Western men writes that "[t]he ethnographic challenge is how to take account of structural inequalities and sociocultural factors that circumscribe women and men's options and inspire new opportunities and imaginings while simultaneously conveying the richness and dignity of their choices without reducing them to calculating instrumentalists or naïve romantics" (Constable 2003a: 225). What I contribute to the discussion of transnational relationships, with Constable's words in mind, is a discussion and negotiation of everyday life in relation to notions of culture, love, gender roles, and social status in a context marked by the business of commercial sex.

Marriages Between Western Men and Filipinas

In Sabang it is easy to see that the vast majority of expats who live there are partnered with a Filipina. They are either legally married or live together in a consensual union, but I will refer to them as 'married,' 'husbands,' and 'wives' regardless of marital status. The topic of transnational relationships is common one in Sabang, and I had countless conversations about how Filipinas experienced living with a foreigner, and vice versa. In this chapter I refer to those conversations, but I also rely on six recorded interviews with five individuals, three expats and two Filipinas, whom I interviewed separately. I got to know some of my informants well, and we had many talks about how it was to live in Sabang with somebody from the Philippines or the West. I can only speculate, but people I was told had met their partners through commercial sex seemed reluctant to talk to me, perhaps because of the stigma associated with the go-go bars. I had only briefer conversations with these individuals on the topic of their marriages.

Intimate relationships often are formed between bar girls and tourists and expats, but several of the people I got to know have also met their

respective partners outside the go-go bars. In the latter case, these couples still tend to meet through their involvement in the tourism industry, since the tourism scene acts as a meeting point for arriving tourists and local women. If the women have obtained a college degree, they often work as hotel receptionists, financial clerks, office assistants, or if they lack any higher education, as waitresses.

The transnational relationships discussed here regard primarily women who either come from one of the 'old' local families, or domestic migrants who worked with administration or other higher-status jobs than for example beach vending. They often hold a respectable position in the social hierarchy of Sabang. The husbands referred to in this chapter met their future wives in Sabang when they were either on vacation or while working, most commonly as diving instructors, or they were expats who met their wives through their businesses. None of the limited number of female expats in Sabang I met had steady Filipino boyfriends or girlfriends.² In very rare cases (I heard vague rumors of two) a Western woman got romantically involved with a local Filipino man. In both cases the couples supposedly chose to settle in the home countries of the women. For many of the people I talked to, Filipino and foreign alike, it seemed important to point out these exceptions – that it was not only foreign men who got involved with locals. I believe this was stressed in order to offer alternative image of transnational relationships, that it didn't *always* involve Western men and Philippine women, and that the pointing out the potential counterexamples was to emphasize that the image of Sabang's women as being 'for sale' was not accurate, and that foreign women also got involved with local Filipinos – however uncommon this was.

The pattern found in Sabang is clearly represented in Philippine national marriage statistics. Of an estimated 300 000 Filipino nationals married to foreigners approximately 92 % are Filipinas (Constable 2005: 4). The National Statistics Office furthermore reported in 2006 that a majority, 5 468, of the women who married foreigners that year married Japanese men, out of a total of 13 497 Filipinas marrying a foreigner. Other foreign nationals that Filipinas married were Americans (3 002), Australians (569),

² There rare exceptions. Wiss (2005:154f), however, reports a foreign woman bar fining a bar girl in Sabang. During my own fieldwork I did not hear of or observe any similar occurrences.

Chinese (393), and German (205). In comparison 3 519 Filipino men were married to foreign women, among whom Chinese women (1 999) were most common, followed by American (514), Japanese (155), and Spanish (129) (Jones & Shen 2008: 23, note 1).

With the common focus in academic literature as well as national media on women migrating as a consequence of marriage, less attention has been given to male marriage migration, and the personal experiences and motivations of the male spouses in gendered migration have largely been left uncommented. What has been written specifically about male expats tends to focus on the culture shock and difficulty of professional businessmen in adapting to their host countries (Kaye & Taylor 1997, Sims & Schraeder 2004) and in some cases Western men who married former sex workers, predominantly in Thailand (Cohen 1982, 1986, 1996; Seabrook 1996) and in the Dominican Republic (Brennan 2004a; O'Connell Davidson 2001). In the literature, the men's migratory stories are often filled with contempt for their native countries and praise for their new homelands, as they are seen as less strict and where women have become overly 'liberated' and have lost touch with their 'natural' femininity. In their new home settings, they can live according to their images of a 'good life' with little state control and access to plentiful subservient young women of color. These kinds of stories are commonplace among many tourists and expats also in Sabang, although they seem less blatantly aggressive, racist, and misogynistic as reported elsewhere (see O'Connell Davidson 2001). Expats' frequent swapping of derogatory stories of the 'backward' Filipino, can often easily be labeled as a perpetuation of a colonial perspective. However, when talking about their own marriages, these men tend to be more nuanced.

White men's choices to marry an Asian woman have often been analyzed in terms of a 'colonial gaze,' and these men are often assumed to be disillusioned by the 'feminist Western woman' (Barry 1995, Burton 1997, Manderson 1996: 125); they find Asian brides to be more in accordance with patriarchal gender roles, where the woman is submissive, loyal, domestically oriented, a good mother, and a faithful wife. As a result, a common assumption is that "the underlying paradox of such marriages is that the men seek a traditional wife while the women hope for more modern husbands" (Lauser 2008: 88). This is not entirely accurate according to my

informants, whose narratives require a more nuanced understanding of their relationship. I will return to this issue shortly.

The male marriage migrants who have chosen to settle in Sabang are often diving instructors, owners of businesses such as resorts, diving shops, restaurants, or pubs, or they are retirees. For many husbands Sabang was the chosen destination of migration mainly due to their relationships with a Filipina, either a local woman or a bar girl. For those who were interested in opening a business Sabang was also a practical option, as the tourism industry offers many opportunities for businesses that would correspond with their desire for a relaxed life. These relationships have left their mark on the local economy. As noted in Chapter 2, *Becoming a Tourist Town*, the investments made by foreigners into tourism enterprises were instrumental in the initial tourism development and have continued to be so throughout the years. Most, if not all, diving shops, a majority of the pubs and restaurants, go-go bars and resorts are owned by expats who are married to a Filipina. The business opportunities were often stated by expats as a reason to settle in Sabang. The Philippines is also considered a relatively easy country to relocate to, as local people speak English and contacts with government officials as well as most of the necessary documents are available in English. Moreover, if the women were locals, the importance they placed on close family ties was another reason to settle in Sabang.

Unlike many Filipinas who move abroad, the husbands do not become solely dependent on the support of their wife or her family, since they often have an income of their own, can communicate with others through English, and have social support in form of the expat community. Aside from their wives, children, employees, and occasional social gatherings with their in-laws, expats are rarely involved in Filipino spheres of local life. The vast majority of the expats I talked said that it was a relaxed expat lifestyle with a Filipina wife that is desired, not immersion into local Filipino social, cultural, financial, or political life.

Many male marriage migrants told me that they have little or no contact with their birth families, and they often have a history of being cosmopolitan travelers, rather than firmly grounded in their home countries. Their move to Sabang involved building up a life there. A sense of placelessness was replaced by having a place to call home (Woube 2014). However, be-

cause Sabang is a tourist site, they do not have to give up what's familiar from the West: very few husbands learn Tagalog (I only met one), they can easily access foreign products, and their everyday social life mainly consist of spending time with other foreigners. They truly become transnational, maintaining ties across the world, and many male marriage migrants express a sense of being neither nor. Michael, an American husband married to a local woman and living in Sabang since the 1980s, talks about his dual sense of feeling like a foreigner but also a Filipino: "Sometimes I feel like a lost soul, you know. I'm American but I've lost most of my identity of the United States. My family, I don't know anymore. My parents passed away; my family's here now... And sometimes, it's difficult because... Okay, imagine: we're, in my house, they're totally all Filipinos, and my son who's half American. I'm the only foreigner and we sit around the table, and they're speaking in Tagalog. I pick up on a few words here and there but most of the conversation I don't understand, which is lonely... So, what I'm doing by myself is watching TV; that's my happiness (he says with a laugh)." Michael says he's gotten used to living in Sabang, despite the fact that he feels left out in everyday activities at home: "It's a whole different life style here. You know, I'm so used to the lifestyle here. If I go back to the States, I'll be like a fish out of the water. I wouldn't know how to handle myself. I am a Filipino, but I can't speak Tagalog."

As Michael mentions, male marriage migration to Sabang often involves cutting across the dualism of private-public spheres, for example adapting to their homes being spaces open for others to freely visit, a dualism they identify as something Western. The multifaceted motivations to migrate to Sabang – to realize dreams of a leisurely lifestyle, to combine their interest in diving with running a business, and to marry the woman they fell in love with – highlights how global patterns of inequalities between rich and poor countries enables them to become owners of their own businesses, but also how personal factors such as love and few ties to their natal countries function as motivating factors to migrate. The step to settle in Sabang is furthermore not necessarily perceived as such a big one; there the husbands can largely continue accessing amenities and products familiar to them and socialize with fellow foreigners. But yet, as Michael's quote reveals, marriage migration may also involve a sense of vulnerability and loneliness, and this particularly so if they have not learned Tagalog.

The reason for not learning Tagalog stated to me by expats was that you could get by speaking English, that they spoke English with their friends and customers, and that they simply had been “too lazy.”

Courtship in Change

Jakob, from Sweden, was, together with Michael, one of the first tourists, after the legendary tourists *Papaya*, in the 1980s to visit Sabang. Jakob had traveled around Asia extensively and heard about Sabang through some travel acquaintances. While staying there he met Anita, and they subsequently got married and had two sons. When more tourists began to find their way to Sabang, Jakob and Anita opened a restaurant and later expanded their business to include a resort and several other smaller enterprises. When the time approached for their children to start school they moved to Sweden, leaving their businesses in the care of Anita’s relatives, and returning to the Philippines on school breaks. Jakob is the only ex-pat that I’ve met who speaks Tagalog fluently, and Anita also learned Swedish. The family mixes Swedish, Tagalog and English when talking to each other. Once the children grew up, Jakob and Anita moved back to Sabang, but they return to Sweden yearly during the summer months.

Jakob told me that initially the Filipino local population found it problematic to deal with the thought of a local woman being involved in an intimate relationship with a foreigner. For example, during the time of his and Anita’s courtship, Jakob describes the reactions of the inhabitants of Sabang in the early 1980s as negative, and at times aggressive: “People were very nice to me, but when it became known that I would marry my wife, there were some problems. Anita was a popular girl among the local boys and they felt I stole her away from them. In a small village like this, they appoint their loves when they’re thirteen-fourteen. And when I came as a foreigner they thought I’d just... and then just leave and never come back. So there were fights. They poisoned my dog and sometimes at night, young men would throw stones at me. I was even chased through the village once with a knife, a machete.” Jakob says he was supported by most of his new Filipino family: “As soon as we were married, all that stopped. My [Filipino] family was on my side. They saw that I worked hard and that

everything went well, and then I was accepted. Also, I became a part of a family, I became their relative, a god-parent and so on.” And Jakob adds: “Things like that are important here.”

At the time Jakob and Anita met, Jakob told me, the Filipino’s views of foreign men was that they were unreliable and amoral – they did not share conventional Filipino moral norms, such as female virginity, religious beliefs, and the sanctity of marriage. These sentiments are present also today. Norma, a woman in her 50s, contemplates her daughter marrying a foreigner: “If she liked a foreigner and she fell in love with the foreigner, I would first talk to the foreigner about how serious he is, ask about his background, but it’s very hard to say, you must get a feeling [of the person] before you can judge the person. You must feel it first. But, for me... I wouldn’t like a foreigner to be the right partner of my daughter. Because my daughter is very sensitive, right? For the foreigner it’s easy to break up, to have a divorce. But for the Filipina, if she fell in love, and they the break up, maybe it will cause a suicide.” While foreign husbands may be associated with wealth, progress, and modernity, relatives of Filipinas also express hesitation whether or not the husbands will respect Filipino notions of marriage, sexuality, and morality.

Leah, a woman in her 30s, was married to an Australian ex-pat, Nick. Together they had a 14-year-old son. Leah was originally from the neighboring *barangay* Sinandigan. Leah’s parents both died when she was young. She was brought up by her aunt and grandparents. Leah’s husband Nick runs a successful business, a diving shop, with a few rooms for rent, and a restaurant. Leah met Nick when she was 17, during a break from her college studies in Batangas, where she studied nursing. She was working as a waitress at the Nick’s restaurant, and they fell in love. Leah and Nick soon moved in together and got married a while after that. When I first met Leah, the couple had been married for 19 years. Like Jakob’s wife, Anita, Leah also married early on in the development of tourism. She told me that her family was not thrilled. “Back then elders were so strict, my grandparents, they were so old fashioned,” she said. “They didn’t want us to live-in, you know, live together without being married...” Leah and Nick cohabited before marriage, and the consequences for doing so, Leah said, were harsh. When Leah moved in with her soon-to-be-husband, her family refused to let her into their house. The conflict only ended when

Nick made it clear that he did intend to marry Leah. “When he asked for my hand, I could go up to Sinandigan again. Afterwards they were so happy, because they could see that my husband was a good person, and they allowed us to go there.”

Although co-habiting before marriage is more common nowadays, in Sabang as elsewhere in the Philippines, elderly women see these new ways with skepticism. These ways are viewed as both the flipside of the modern and as results of the negative influences of the less morally bound foreigners. Feliciano, an elderly local woman, was a talkative person who had lived her whole life in Sabang and had experienced the development of tourism from the beginning. In our interviews, Feliciano talked at length about how she feels that youngsters today don’t respect their elders, by not conforming to traditions of courtship under the watchful eyes of their parents or asking the prospective bride’s parents permission for marriage, that is, having a proper engagement (*pamamahikan*). Foreigners, she feels, don’t learn about these traditions, including her Swedish son-in law, who married one of her youngest daughters. She says: “I just told myself: ‘Thank you’ that when the tourists arrived, it was just the two of my youngest daughters who were unmarried. The others were married already.”

Foreign men are in general seen as attractive partners for local women, but women intimately involved with foreigners, as well as their families, often negotiate the unconventional aspects of the relationships, such as having married someone from another culture. These men may have different values in regards to morality, gender ideals, or faith, and the wives and their families often pointed out how their prospective partners and son-in-laws “visited the family” and “talked to the parents” in order to seek their approval. The Filipina wives and their families often turn to narratives of following Filipino conventions and norms in describing the initial period of relationships, or courtship (*panliligam*). Risks of association with immorality or improper conduct are mitigated by emphasizing traditional aspects of relationships between a Filipina and a foreigner. They do so to counteract the potential risks of being deemed as immoral when engaging in a foreigner where the conventional cultural norms are transgressed and perceived as different and potentially threatening the wives’ status of being morally appropriate. Filipinos often attempt to integrate the transnational relationships into their perception of a ‘proper’ relationship when

placed in a Filipino social and moral context. Issues of love are intertwined with cultural notions of sexual morality. As earlier noted, people who met through ‘unconventional’ means, through the sex scene, did not want to talk to me about it. Also, women who met their foreign husbands outside the go-go bars were at pains to convince me that their relationships were initiated in a morally acceptable manner. Leah, who indeed had moved in with her partner before marriage, talked at length about how she had been properly punished for her transgression, situating her transgression and its consequences in a conventional Filipino moral context.

From the perspective of many of my Filipino informants, transformations of marriage and courtship practices are interpreted as results of demonstration and acculturation effects, that the Filipinos are taking after the foreigners. These ideas indicate that there has been a re-arrangement of intimate relations, identified as having taken place also between Filipinos, since the arrival of foreigners. What were considered by many of my Filipino informants too be old norms of, for example, chastity before marriage, chaperoning of youth, and prolonged courtship are said not to be held in as high regard as before tourism. Transformations in courtship and marriage practices are certainly not unique to tourism towns such as Sabang, but are found throughout the country (Tan et al. 2001). However, in Sabang is tourism singled out as the main explanation for these sorts of changes. Tourism offers a concrete or tangible way of making sense of the transformations of values and norms regarding gender roles.

Making the Household Work

Expecting cultural misunderstandings in transnational relationships, the national government takes action in order to prevent the separation of spouses. Under the Department of Foreign Affairs’ guidelines, attending a “Guidance and Counseling Program” is a prerequisite to obtaining their Filipino/foreign passports. The objective of the counseling program is “to inform the spouse or fiancé make informed decisions and prepare them on (*sic*) the realities of cross-cultural marriages” (Alama 2008). The issue of potential conflicts due to different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds in intimate relationships is thus not something personal,

but a matter for the church and state. Unfortunately, I learned about this counseling program after my last period of fieldwork, and as many of my informants who were involved in transnational relationships were not legally married, I have no insight into whether or not the people who had undergone the counseling found it rewarding. But it is noteworthy that the state and Catholic Church intervened in order to preserve the sanctity of marriage and regard transnational relationships as being in need of extra attention.

Marissa was in her late 40s when she met John from Australia, while he was there on vacation and she in Sabang on business. She was born in the province of Laguna on the main island, Luzon. She talks about her childhood as a happy one, although she had to start taking responsibility of contributing to the support of her family at an early age. After high school, she attended college for two years, majoring in commerce. Marissa had five children with her previous Filipino “on-and-off” husband, as she put it. They were never legally married, and she is not married to John either. Marissa’s motto goes: “You can replace your husband, but never replace your children.” When John moved to Sabang, Marissa also settled there, bringing one of her sons to live with them. Later another son joined them. Three of her children were already adults at the time she met John. Pursuing several minor income-generating projects is still something that occupies her, aside from helping out at the pub John owns.

Marissa also says: “I want to give all my services to him. But, first of all, respect. Not only show the feelings. Yes, I’m very sweet to him and he is sweet to me. I want him to know that I respect him. That is very important, very important to me: respect.” At home Marissa wants to be in charge of the household chores: “I tell him [John]: ‘Don’t do that, I want to respect you. I don’t want you to be *ander*’ [literary: under, meaning subordinated]. Because, Elina, in the Philippines, I don’t know how it is in other places, but when I have a guest and then John washes the dishes or washes dresses, they say: ‘Wow, he’s *ander*, maybe he cut his *titi* [penis].’ You know, *ander de saya* [under the skirt], that he is always hiding under my skirt.”

Ander de saya, or just *ander*, refers to an emasculated, henpecked male. The general Filipino ideal of the complementarity of gender roles is one where men and women are allocated different roles and duties in the

household. However, this is not strictly enforced either by the people involved in transnational relationships or in Filipino marriages I have had occasion to observe. However, dividing roles and tasks between men and women are ideals that most of my informants said to me are important for them. In Sabang complimentary gender roles and their gender-based division of labor are not considered as exploitative by most couples (see Brennan 2004a: 169). For Marissa, for example, the woman's role was to be the caretaker of the home, and she made a strong point of not letting John take on what she considered female tasks.

John, for his part, accepted that Marissa takes care of the household chores, and said: "She won't let me do anything." He told me that he has tried to partake in household work, which he wanted to do in the beginning of their relationship, according to his ideas of gender equality. But since it is important for Marissa, he lets her take charge of the work in the house, and John considers this as showing respect for Marissa's cultural preferences. This was something that many husbands reported: they said they had not deliberately chosen a traditional woman, but they were not allowed to wash the dishes, cook food, or do the laundry. This also came across to me as a way of situating their relationship beyond a narrow stereotype that Western men marry a Filipina to take care of the household for them, making researchers ask if the result of female marriage migration is to become a "wife or worker?" (Piper & Roces 2003). In the case of male marriage migration to Sabang, the husbands found that they were excluded from household work, which they also said was something they after all didn't mind.

The Filipina wives I talked to told me that they thought it was important for them to take care of the household, that it was their way of fulfilling their ideal of womanhood. But in Sabang I found that the issue of household work to be more complex. Although the wives take responsibility of household work, they often in turn delegate the practical implementation of those duties to employees. The wives of foreign men often have the financial capability to do so. Indeed, most of the married couples I have talked to in Sabang reported that they spend most of their time running their various businesses, and little time at home. Often married couples meet when it's time for lunch or dinner and these meals are often taken at their own restaurants. Employees and live-in-relatives

take care of the household chores and little household work is done by the married couples themselves. The women are thus enabled to maintain responsibility of their arena, but also to delegate the tasks perceived more burdensome to their employees. Marissa, for example, takes great pride in being a “good wife” and keeps close to the conventional gender roles, and often pointed out how much she cooks and how handwashes John’s clothes. In practice, though, she relies on the two waitresses she and John employ in their pub when extra cleaning is needed, such as when John’s mother came to visit.

Household work and its practical implementation became an issue of class: women like Marissa and Leah can fulfill their views of ideal of female gender role, and they have the financial capabilities to choose which aspects of that role to fulfill in practice. However, Leah found it problematic to formulate a role that was comfortable for her when it came to taking care of the family and household chores. As her husband owned a restaurant the family members often ate there, “I don’t need to cook,” Leah stated. But she quickly added: “Even though we eat at the restaurant we are still a family,” and she said that she preferred eating there as there would be so much food going to waste if she cooked at their house. Although Leah may not live according to old gender conventions, she still emphasizes her role as being in charge of household work and being a caring and nurturing wife and mother. In the transnational relationships in Sabang, the conventional gender roles may be challenged (see Palriwala & Uberoi 2008: 42). Both Leah and Marissa strived to be conventional wives, but they could themselves decide on how to carry out this role.

Family Expectations Negotiated

Foreign men who marry a local woman and settle in Sabang become parts of large extended families. This often means the men have to adapt to a life of family obligations, such as not only supporting their own family nuclear family but also the in-laws, becoming *Ninong* (Godfather) and thus commit to a life-long relation to their *Inaanak* (Godchildren). This seems daunting to some husbands, and experienced expats often urge newcomers *not* marry a woman from Sabang, in line with the “repeated doctrine

of expatriate knowledge is not to marry locally” (Wiss 2005: 31). This doctrine reiterates a warning, that if you get married to a local woman, you may be facing family expectations you are not comfortable with. However, having an extended family is also appreciated by my married expat informants at a personal level, as well as at a practical one. Michael said: “I was very lucky to marry the woman, she’s got a great family.” When making this statement Michael started pointing out all the relatives he employed: “This is her brother [pointing to one of the men working nearby].” He continued to explain: “My wife, she comes from a family of fourteen kids. They are seven brothers and seven sisters. This is Arnold, one among the sons, and the other boys here are Romil, and this is my wife brother, and Angelo over there behind the wall is my wife’s father’s son, but he has another mother.” When explaining this, Michael said: “Yeah, it’s a Filipino tradition to help the family and to employ as many as possible. It’s also, I think, done for security reasons, because you know where they live and you know the family. I’m very involved with my wife’s family. I help them when I can, they often come over and they eat with us, spend the night, they don’t even have to ask if they sleep here tonight, they just do it, it’s accepted. My son, he has a lot of *barkada* [peer group], and they come over spend the night. I have only a one boy, but on the average, well, like five or six kids sleeping over.” Michael also explained that they had two employees living with them as well, and he said: “Oh, it’s quite a happening place. A lot of action’s going on.”

For Michael, as well as for other ex-pats, employing members of the extended family is a strategy to ensure security as the family members are expected to keep an eye out for each other and the business. Family obligations are also often stated to encourage the employees to remain loyal to the business. However, the responsibilities of being involved in an extended family may conflict with their own perceptions of individuality and become a source of frustration. At times husbands convey a sense of being taken advantage of by their in-laws. Michael says: “They think I’m so rich and come and ask for loans, but they don’t realize that I’m not and that I’ve invested all my money in this business and I am also dependent on the income I get from it.” Before the development of the tourism industry many favorable land leases were signed between the husbands and their relatives, as Michael says: “*Mang* [respectful title given to elderly]

Roberto gave me a lease on the land, a twenty-five-year lease for a hundred pesos [USD 2] a month. I'm still paying the same rent for my house, which today is a joke." The husbands may thus gain access to land through their in-laws.

Just as Michael mentions, a common topic in husbands' tales of their marriages, is how Filipinos view them as wealthy. Many of the husbands I talked to contested their assumed wealth, and many expressed suspicions that they were taken advantage of by their Filipino relatives. The husbands would tell me, for example, that their Filipino relatives often come with requests for loans, that the expectations of their donations and presents for weddings, birthdays, and Christmas were more than they could afford. The husbands often identify themselves as "getting by" and that they earn just enough to be able to live a good life, and do not relate themselves to the wealthiest Filipinos in Sabang. Furthermore, the male marriage migrants are aware of Filipino concepts of family obligations, which are also commended as caring, nurturing, and loving; they have difficulty in relaxing their own standpoints of private as opposed to family or public property. When Filipino demands for family support and cooperation were experienced as too demanding, the Western husbands tend to view this as being taken advantage of. Both husbands and wives tend to emphasize how the expat husband has been able to adapt to Filipino ways, pointing out his willingness to adapt to Filipino society. However, the willingness of the husbands to share with and provide for the extended family is not limitless.

Gender Ideals and "Marrying Up"

In Sabang, an individual who marries for practical or material reasons risks being seen as someone superficial and 'plastic,' or fake. The discourse of 'true love' is dominant among the transnational couples, and they refute many of the common preconceptions and stereotypes surrounding their relationships. Love is important for Marissa when comparing John to her previous Filipino husband; it is not romantic love that is the most important aspect of their relationship: "Since I have kids with my first husband the differences are too big to compare. But also, one thing that is very

different is that I love him. Yeah. *Mahal ko siya, mahal ko si John* [I love him, I love John]. But, you know; love is love, I don't care, I only want respect. I said to John: 'I respect you, and you're already here in my heart. But if I lose my respect for you, maybe I also lose... Maybe it will be: Bye, bye.' John has the same opinion." But Marissa worries that the stereotypes of her being a Filipina and John a foreigner, and that she would be seen as a gold-digger, might affect her relationship with John, and she is eager to point out her independence: "Before I was the breadwinner, but now, I have a husband.... But I don't want my husband to... because he's a foreigner, I don't want my husband to think badly of me. I control what money I send to my family. As of now, I don't send any money because I don't want John to think badly of me. Before, it was okay because it was *my* money." Marissa said she did not want to burden John with economic contributions to her family, knowing that it was an undertaking Westerners like John would not perhaps readily agree to. This was an ideal she wanted to impress on me, and this signals how important it was for her to be seen as an independent woman.

Marissa emphasizes that she's not in love with John because he is Australian and comparatively well off, or because he is white, and that for her relationship is a question of individual love and of being true to her feelings. This is in contrast with a widely held view that Filipinas and other Asian women marry foreigners for money, rather than love (Constable 2003a). For Marissa is authenticity of feelings very important. In her opinion a person should not be 'plastic,' which a woman would be if she married with the primary reason being his skin color and assumed wealth, and she rejects the notion that she is dependent on him. Highlighting informants' notions individual notions of love and romance is not to reject global patterns of power. "To say that women express agency – they make choices and negotiate their situations – is not to romanticize or to ignore the structural and ideological factors that constrain their choices" (Constable 2003a: 30), which Marissa's reasoning on status, race, financial independence, and love and attraction illustrates.

In contrast with Marissa's and other Filipina informants' stories of romance and love in their transnational relationships, it is widely assumed, both academically and popularly in the Philippines, that Filipinas seek foreign, white partners for strategic reasons. The researcher in social work

Ronald E. Hall (2001), who has a particular interest in issues of race and skin color, for example, argues that Filipinas are victims of a psychological colonization, with imposed Western ideals of beauty, and as such they are predisposed to seek what he labels “eurogamy,” or marrying Europeans, mainly to produce an offspring of lighter skin color. “Eurogamy can be categorized as a select marital specific dictated by Western domination under the rubric of exogamy” (R.E. Hall 2001: 94). R.E. Hall’s position evokes the image of Filipinas as victims, governed by postcolonial patterns of poverty, racial hierarchies, need, helplessness, and subordination, an image the women represented here do not subscribe to.

Transnational relationships involving men from the West and women from Asia, and the implied *female* marriage migration, have generally been analyzed in terms of global patterns of discrepancies and exploitation (Cunneen & Stubbs 1997; Lisborg 2002).³ Issues of class, race, gender, and cultural differences are main themes in the bulk of the literature. In much theorizing of marriage migration, the motivation of Asian women to marry Western men has for the most part been reductively understood as attempts to seek to improve their life situations. Through marriages women have aimed for a potential hypergamy, or marrying up, by accessing the imagined attractiveness of the ‘modernity,’ ‘development,’ and ‘wealth’ of the West.

Philippine media also portray Filipinas as marrying foreigners for strategic reasons, as contrasted with romantic ones. One such article was published at the online GMA network entitled: “Many Filipinas Marry Foreigners for Money, not Love” (GMA Feb 3. 2009). There are also numerous pages and discussion forums online where foremost foreigners discuss topics such as: “Are most Filipinas gold diggers/scammers?” (Happier Abroad Forum Community 2016) or post warnings such as: “Beware of Pinay Scammers” (Voniquita 2016). Furthermore, this particular kind of couple, where women from the South and men from the West marry, are also at times considered to be an extension of commercial sex trade (Altman 2001: 115, Lisborg 2002: 111f), and closely associated

³ The vulnerability of many women when migrating to their husbands’ countries is certainly to be taken seriously. Cunneen and Stubbs (1997: 122) found, for example, that Filipinas aged between 20 and 39, married to Australian men were 5.6 times over-represented as victims of homicide – often at the hands of their Australian husbands – in comparison to their Australian-born female counterparts.

to an international marriage industry, with commercialized introduction agencies where e-mail order brides pose as a main veneer.

The general setup for analysis has been the juxtaposing of notions of rich/poor, active/passive, modern/traditional, international/domestic, and so forth. However, the tendency to understand transnational relationships in dichotomized terms has been called into question. The agency of the women when seeking to marry foreign men has been highlighted (Constable 2003a, 2003b, 2005; Freeman 2005). Furthermore, notions of romance, love, and passion do not exclude pragmatic considerations when choosing a life partner. In Sabang, women often told me that if the result of marrying a foreigner leads to a more prominent position, it is more of a side effect of choosing to marry a man they love. Their husband's often favorable economic situation enables them to fulfill their conventional Filipino gender roles as dutiful daughters who support their extended families, and the roles as mothers who can provide a good life for their children and loving wives. The limitations of overly generalized approaches have been pointed out, resulting in localized and specific manifestations and practices of marriage migration (Lowrie 2005: 129f), one of which I discuss in this chapter.

When talking about her initial attraction to John, Marissa told me: "I saw his hands; they were *maganda* [beautiful]. I fell in love with his hands, not the face. Only the hands. They were clean, they were good looking to me, clean." In our talks Marissa rejected the idea of her falling in love with John due to him being white, and she emphasized her unique love for John, the individual. Marissa's statement of her first attraction to John shows how "personal circumstances, personality imagination, serendipity, and other imponderables also factor in" (Constable 2003a: 28) in the formation of a transnational relationship. Overly simplistic notions of global patterns of attraction overlook the factors the individuals themselves value and find significant. Marissa was certainly aware of the stereotypical notion of a Filipina as wanting a foreign husband at almost any cost. But Marissa, together with most wives I talked to, rejected the idea that they were in a transnational relationship for notions of eurogamy or hypergamy. And they certainly don't use these terms. However, ideas of 'marrying up' are voiced when women marry a foreigner. When talking about women with people not in a transnational relationship, this idea is noticeable in

the often-said phrase “maybe she wants a better life.” Marrying a foreigner often involve marrying an individual who is most often perceived by the Filipino community as more affluent and as having transnational ties, offering the possibility of migration, for many stated as a desirable goal if the woman wishes to earn more or access better education and health care. However, most people I talked to on the subject focused on the happiness of the wives and the husbands, and a potential of improving one’s life’s conditions could be a positive effect in this search of his or her happiness. People may have pragmatic reasons to get involved with a Filipina or a foreigner, but these do not negate romantic ones.

Getting married to a foreigner did not involve any major adjustments, according to Leah, and she says that in her marriage she brings together her Filipino upbringing with her husband’s Australian background. She argues that the adjustments were already well underway when she met Nick. Nick had already been living in Sabang for several years when they met. Leah told me that he then could show a greater understanding than perhaps a newcomer would. Leah refers to the Filipino concept of “mutual accommodation” (Cannell 1999: 42), that in her experience they were both easing into marriage. Important to note that for Leah it was important that Nick had undergone a process of adjustment, not only her. There certainly were different opinions and experiences to overcome, but in these transnational relationships the couples stressed a view of relationships as processes of giving and taking – perhaps to a greater degree than what they would have if they had been involved with somebody of their own respective background.

When Leah was asked what she thought her life would have been like if she would have married a Filipino instead of a foreigner she answered: “Sometimes I do think of that, but only sometimes. If I see a Filipina with a Filipino husband and they are happy together, and they are very good to each other, sometimes I think: what if I would have the same? And then, when I see other cases, when I see the Filipina wife working and the husband just drinking, I say: ‘What if my husband would be the same?’ I say: ‘I will not give up this thing that is very good.’” And sometimes when I see the others, especially the *tambay* [bystanders, slackers], with no work, I prefer to have a foreigner. I’m talking only about what I’ve experienced, from working at the pub. Most of them [foreigners] are good, I mean,

70% of them are good husbands.” Leah here carefully compares how she sees the differences between a Filipino and a foreign husband. She refers to a stereotype of the Filipino man as a macho, lazy, and unfaithful man prioritizing his *barkada* (peer group) and drinking with them before his duties to the family (Constable 2003a). But Leah also points out that also foreign men can neglect their duties and their families: “But I also saw some foreigners that I knew were married, but they also had a fling on the side. Not all. I think in all countries, they are all the same; there are some bad [people] and there are some good [people]. So, I have nothing against the Filipino husbands. It’s maybe because they are very poor and they are already so down, and that’s why they are drinking. I still prefer to have my husband, to have a foreigner, you know. I mean, not because I don’t like them [Filipinos], it’s just how I see things in this area. I don’t know how it is in other areas.” By noting that foreign men also have “flings on the side” she doesn’t wish to state that one is better than the other among Filipino or foreign men. It should also be noted how Leah emphasizes being in a transnational relationship “in this area,” indicating that being in a relationship in Sabang may be different from other places. The extensive sex scene – which is an assumed attraction for all men – and a general sense of loss of ‘proper’ sexual morality may put a strain on the relationship.

The Western husbands and the Filipina wives often state that differences in their socio-cultural background become evident for them when it comes to dealing with conflicts. Quarreling is part of most marriages, but in Sabang they also seem to provide a confirmation of the partners’ cultural differences. The generally speaking indirect manner of dealing with conflicts among Filipinos is often found amusing and as well as a source of pride, as a sign of the power and status of the Filipina among the foreigners – contrary to the idea of Western men looking for a timid and submissive Asian woman. Many husbands I talked to were eager to point out their wives’ strengths and how independent they were. Sten, a Swedish diving instructor in his 50s had previously been married to a Swedish woman, but they had divorced. Through his work he met his new wife, who was a Filipina who worked at the office of the resort he also worked for. When talking about having conflicts or disagreements within the relationship Sten said: “They’re tough, these Filipinas. They’re so shy and timid at first, but then you discover they’re really tough. When

I come home and she won't say anything to me I know I've done something wrong. She can be quiet for days: The silent treatment. Often it is something that I did, that I did not loan a relative money, came home late and too drunk or something like that. Just because they don't scream and shout doesn't mean they're not tough."

Husbands like Sten, often reject the idea that they married a subjugated woman and tend to emphasize their wives' powerful positions in their family. Another Swede, Patrik, echoes Sten's sentiment when saying: "They're hardly geishas standing in the corner, bowing and doing everything for you. They're strong women. Yes, outwardly they are controlled; avoid conflicts, soft and so forth. But you can never push a Filipina around." This insistence may be a way of marking their distance, awareness of the negative stereotypical image of them. The couples thus tend to minimize aspects of their relationships pertaining to gender inequality, racial presuppositions, or financial disparities. However, their negation of such aspects also signals an awareness of them (Constable 2003a: 225). In the couples' narratives, they express complex networks of ideas of class, gender, love, and marriage that are negotiated, and these negotiations are undertaken in relation to widespread stereotypical notions of transnational relationships.

Love in the Midst of Commercial Sex

The benefits for the women of choosing to settle in Sabang – the support of their families, being able to maintain their individual and cultural identities, to fulfill their families' expectations for a daughter and wife – this choice nonetheless has its downsides. In Sabang most transnational couples have to relate to commercial sex in one way or another. I will point out two aspects that my female informants often brought up regarding something that bothered them, namely living as a Filipina in Sabang's sexscape, and jealousy.

Many wives fear that they are being branded as prostitutes simply because people assume that they met their husbands through commercial sex. The particular context of Sabang, as a sexscape where Filipino women's sexuality often is commercialized, posed some problems for several

of the wives I talked to. The first few years Marissa found it difficult to live permanently in Sabang: “It was a very difficult adjustment: it’s a bad environment here. But, I know some other places also have bad environments but it’s different here. There are many GROs [Guest Relations Officer, or sex worker] here. In Manila, I can walk alone and people don’t care about you, but here, if I’m walking alone, I feel like I’m seen as a pick-up girls because many foreigners think: ‘Oh, maybe she’s a pick-up girl’, or whatever. Oh, even though I’m very old [in her late 40s], but when walking alone, they maybe think I’m a pick-up girl. I don’t like that.”

The husbands, on the other hand, rarely express any anxiety about being viewed as sex tourists. John, for example, merely shrugged his shoulders when asked about the topic and said: “You just don’t care. You would go crazy if you walked around thinking about that. I know I’m faithful to Marissa and what others think is up to them.” Similar sentiments were repeated to me by several expats: they are aware of people’s preconceptions of them and their wives, but they choose to ignore them. The potential immorality of being associated with commercial sex was thus something the wives found problematic, while the husbands did not report being affected by the stigma to the same extent. Also, the previously mentioned insistence of individual feelings of love also tells of a wish to separate oneself from the sex industry. Commercial sex is assumed to be void of romantic feelings – although in reality it is something that involves highly complex notions of love and commercialization. The wives wish to emphasize that they did not marry a foreigner for any reason that would make them seem similar to bar girls, that they indeed marry out of love, not for money.

Another aspect that was often brought up by my informants was the issue of jealousy, or more specifically the wives’ jealousy. Stories of men (both Filipino and foreigner) who were unfaithful to their wives were common themes in my talks with women in Sabang. There is a general perception of men as ‘butterflies’ and that the temptations of commercial sex are too great for men to resist (as discussed in Chapter 4, *Bar Girls and Bar Work* and Chapter 5, *Living in a Sex Tourism Town*). Marissa told me that she was worried that John once had paid for sex. One night John had come home very late, and she suspected that he had paid for sex with a bar girl: “Maybe he was bar hopping, I don’t know. Maybe there was an-

other girl.” She went on to tell me how John’s behavior had been odd to her, that he had spent the following day sleeping, which she was not used to. Then she lowered her voice: “I’ve been with him for several years and I don’t want to be checking his cell phone, or his wallet, because it’s no good. But John was sleeping and the cell phone was here [pointing at the table we were sitting at], and I had a feeling... *Bakit?* [Why?] I don’t know.” She had decided to check his messages and discovered that he had been texting with someone over a price, and the price was 1 500 pesos (USD 30). Marissa’s reaction was: “My God! Yeah, a bar fine!” The sum of 1 500 pesos is the standard price of a bar fine, and she suspected that John had negotiated this price. “I was crying and crying”, she said, “but, he told me he was not using [engaging in commercial sex], that it was a turn off.” Despite John’s assurances Marissa was still uncertain: “I don’t know if it was true or not, but why did he do that to me? Maybe he only tried only once, but why? Maybe he’s not happy with me, maybe, sorry I mean no offense, but maybe I’m no good at sex or something like that.” Marissa became insecure of herself, jealous and self-doubting. But in a practical way she also wondered about her own safety: “And then, of course, I was scared that maybe the other girl had a disease from the bar.”

The go-go bars were seen by the wives as morally and sexually charged places, but their husbands did not always share this perspective. When talking to expats about the go-go bars many often saw them as like any other pub, but with something pretty to look at. In fact, the pubcrawls organized by and for expats often include a stop at one or two of the go-go bars. I was told by expats that the go-go bars were good places to have a beer since they had air-conditioning, which other pubs in Sabang do not offer. For them it the go-go bars were good places to hang out with their friends. The wives I talked to did not share this view, and the go-go bars were a potential source of conflict.

The people involved in transnational relationships in Sabang are all aware of, but react differently to, the stereotypes of their intimate relationships. Being associated with commercial sex is a more pressing issue for the wives than for the husbands, and being identified as a sex worker is more damaging than being identified as a sex buyer.

Concluding Remarks

In Sabang the view of transnational relationships has been transformed throughout the years of tourism development, from being negatively regarded to becoming a commonplace occurrence. These relationships have also been significant components in the developing tourism sector as the husbands have invested in tourism-related enterprises.

Marissa, Leah, Michael, and Jakob, as well as the other husbands and wives I talked to, often spoke of how they negotiate their own and their partner's cultural, gendered, and racial identities, but mainly they spoke of love for their spouses and of sincere efforts to understand each other despite their different backgrounds. Transnational relationships in Sabang are an effect of tourism and transnationalism, and it is through these processes they met their partners and maintained their relationships. The couples experience and negotiate ambiguities in regards to morality and immorality, issues that have been raised by tourism development, and in particular sex tourism. In a context where conventional pre-marital and marital norms and practices have been undergone transformations, a sense of insecurity seems to remain.

The couples' choice to settle in Sabang shows that there is no one-directional movement of people from the poor countries to wealthier ones, nor does marriage migration necessarily have to imply female marriage migration – although male marriage migration still constitutes a small part of the global patterns of transnational relationships. Both husband and wives largely maintain a tendency to maintain their original cultural identities and lifestyle, which is facilitated by Sabang being an international tourism town. Nonetheless, both husbands and wives have to find the way through a maze of assumed dichotomies of love/pragmatism, foreign/Filipina, rich/poor, equal/unequal, and moral/immoral.

Becoming a transnational tourist town has led to new sets of social relations. The fact that Filipino women and Western men are engaging intimately with each other has become a common and a part of everyday life in Sabang. Other relations and foreigners that have emerged in the course of tourism development have not yet become integrated or accepted to the same extent. The newest foreigners in Sabang, those from South Korea, remain largely at the borders of the already established Filipino-Western social order.

8. The New Others

Introduction

The Philippines is adjusting to a shift in international tourism trends and practices where Asian outbound tourism is growing. This is also the case in Sabang, which now receives more and more Asian tourists, primarily from South Korea.

A recurring theme in the previous chapters has been that of othering, how Filipinos and Westerners construct themselves vis-à-vis each other in daily encounters in Sabang. There has been a focus on boundary-making and cross-cultural differences, and to a lesser degree also construction of sameness. These are also central themes in this chapter, but now the focus will be on constructions of sameness between Filipinos and Westerners and differences between them and the New Others, the South Korean tourists and expats. What happens when a new category of foreigners enters the local tourism scene? What are the reactions of the already established populations?

The increase of Korean presence in Sabang has also raised some questions among Filipino and foreign informants about who has the right to access, use, transform, and claim ownership of Sabang, and in which manner such entitlement issues should be acted out. Issues of not only ownership and entitlements are being revisited but also the manner in which to behave, talk, write, and move around in Sabang is becoming pressing.

Korean Presence in Sabang

From the turn of the 21st century, Korean expats have increasingly been establishing resorts, attracting a greater number of Korean tourists. For the people of Sabang, there have been many changes to take into account: changes involving new ways of narrating, constructing, behaving, moving, and literally speaking. In this case the “otherness machine” (Aitchison 2001: 144) in local construction of tourism and tourists is activated as the locals need to relate to a new group of tourists and ex-pats. This development has occurred during a relatively short period of time, and it has been intensive. For example, the Korean-owned resorts tend to host 30 to 40 rooms, and the largest 55 rooms. By local standards these resorts are larger than the norm, as many of the smaller accommodations have 3 to 10 rooms, and the mid-sized resorts have 10 to 30 rooms. The majority of the large resorts are owned by Western and Korean expats, while Filipinos tend to own the smaller establishments. There are very limited numbers of Korean expats in Sabang; in 2015 approximately six Koreans were identified by locals as permanent residents, one of whom was a missionary and not directly involved in the tourism industry. Their small number notwithstanding, together with the increasing number of Korean tourists, they have had a significant impact on local tourism.

A few tourism facts are perhaps called for here to illustrate the rapidity of the recent changes in Sabang’s tourism. In tandem with the development of Korean-owned enterprises, Korean tourists became a more common occurrence. Recording local tourist arrivals has been inconsistent throughout the years, and the nationalities of the arriving tourists are unknown. To the local population, as well in my experience, there has been a significant increase in the presence of Korean tourists, and some five Korean expats have established themselves in Sabang since the early 2000s. The increasing presence of Korean tourists in Puerto Galera can be viewed as a reflection of the national number of tourist arrivals in the Philippines, and also the Philippine government’s active attempts to expand their market share of the growing Korean outbound touristmarket, through various promotional programs. Visitors from the United States and Japan have historically been the main sources of foreign visitors to the Philippines, followed by Korea. In the mid-1990s the yearly total of

Korean arrivals in the Philippines numbered approximately 170 000. After a general plunge in Asian traveling due to the financial crises towards the end of the decade, the Korean tourist arrivals quickly started picking up pace from the year 2000 and onwards. Korean nationals now top the international arrivals in the Philippines (DOT 2016).¹

Although they are nowadays common visitors in Sabang, I had meager results in my attempts at making contact with these New Others. Throughout my stays in Sabang I tried in several ways to contact Korean tourists and expats, for example through Filipino informants who either worked for a Korean expat or leased land to one, but I failed. My Korean neighbors at various resorts often seemed shy and looked away when passing by my balcony or meeting me on the stairs. Had I perhaps been more focused on getting to know Korean tourists, by for example patronizing Korean-owned dive shops, my efforts could have had a different outcome. However, I do not scuba dive, and I could not figure out any other ways to get in touch with Korean tourists, as they often did excursion in groups in which I could not participate. I will shortly return to the aspect of isolation on the part of Koreans and the social consequences of this isolation. I have no possibility of discussing the voices and experiences of the Korean tourists and expats. My focus is rather on how they are perceived by the established populations.

Through my efforts I did gain insight into how my other informants may experience the Koreans, namely as being difficult to get to know. I was far from the only one in Sabang who found it difficult to approach these new tourists and expats. In fact, the Koreans were often explained to me as being unknown and unfamiliar by most people I met in Sabang. This lack of experience with the New Others, combined with the scale and pace of developments, is often experienced as overwhelming and even threatening, as one local woman said: “Maybe time will come that they will prevail in this place. Who knows? We don’t know their language; maybe they are planning something bad for us.” Her suspicion rests on

¹ These numbers do not strictly refer to Korean holiday makers, as they also include business travelers, which also indicates an increase trade and business relations between Korea and the Philippines during the same period. Furthermore, the Philippines has become a popular destination to attend English language courses among Koreans. The municipality of Puerto Galera hosted a language school for a few years in the mid-2000s, which contributed to the increase in registered Korean tourist arrivals

the fact that the Koreans are as yet the unknown and unfamiliar, and this makes some of the locals uncomfortable.

Damaging Rumors

One morning the *barangay* was bustling with rumors of a murder that supposedly had taken place the previous night. The versions of the rumors I heard differed in form and details, but the culprit was always a Korean male tourist. Assembling the bits and pieces people were gossiping about, the rumor went something like this: A Korean tourist had bar fined an under-aged bar girl the night before. Something made him angry, and he killed her. He then rolled her up in a mat and dumped her outside the resort where he was staying. Her body had been found very early in the morning, and the police were called to the scene. By the time the town starting waking up, the Korean tourist had already left Sabang, along with the one who found the body, and people speculated that they had probably been sent away with the first *banca* going to Batangas. Suspiciously, the body, it was said, disappeared from the morgue before anyone had had a chance to actually see it. It was suspected that the Korean tourist had bribed the police so there was no evidence left of the alleged crime. The rumor had been taken seriously and the police had been called and dispatched to Sabang. When I went to the chief of police a day later, he told me that they had not found anything suggesting a murder had taken place. The rumor died down after a few days, and a year later it was generally forgotten.

This rumor illustrates the potential consequences of being unknown but nevertheless highly visible in a small tourist town. In these rumors, Koreans are imagined to be capable of deadly force, violent sexual preferences (in some versions it was sex gone awry that killed the bar girl), and lack of respect for a bar girl's life or her dead body. The story thus also reiterates a widespread notion of the local and national authorities as corrupt and not to be trusted. In this case the lack of witnesses and tangible proof tended to confirm people's suspicions rather than calm them, and the unknown and outsider status of the Koreans makes it possible to believe nearly anything about them.

Another theme that emerges from the rumor of the dead bar girl concerned the presumed wealth of the Koreans, and association with illegal economic activities. The large-scale resorts give the appearance of huge amounts of money and of 'big business.' Kurt, a long-time German expat, formulates a commonly held assumption among expats, that Korean expats are involved in international money laundering: "When you watching what the Koreans are doing, they are paying rents that are totally out of this world. So, from a business point of view it seems total folly what they are doing, because they're paying huge amounts of funds for just about anything. So the obvious conclusion is really money laundering." Kurt seems to have given the issue some thought and made some calculations, finding that, as far as he knows, the Korean businesses aren't sustainable: "Some businesses in front of you are total folly, that someone rents a disco and pays four million pesos [USD 80 000] a year in rent. I mean, you just have to sit down and do the math and find out that you cannot possibly make that kind of money, you can't. It's simply not applicable."

Kurt conveys a commonly held view of Korean expats as suspiciously wealthy, and that this wealth is a result of illegal activities. As his statement and the rumor of the dead bar girl shows, Koreans as a category are continually associated with ruthlessness and potential violence, and Koreans are assumed to be well connected through wealth with the local police and government. I was also warned by an Australian expat: "If it really is a cover-up it might be risky for a foreign researcher to start digging in it." Rumors and assumptions of the Koreans' wealth, connections, and illicit activities are thus commonplace. It should be noted, however, that same sort of rumors of dubious pasts also surround some of the Western expats, and the idea that foreigners choose to settle in Sabang in order to avoid a shady past is not exclusive to Korean expats – but they are more commonly voiced in a hush-hush tone. I got the impression that it was the anonymity of the Korean expats and the relative certainty that one can pass on rumors without facing the individual talked about that prompted the more open gossiping about the Korean foreigners.

The rapid changes accompanied by the increase in Korean presence seem to have evoked a sense of instability or insecurity among the established populations. The relative anonymity of the Koreans and lack of venues for social interactions further suggests an image of a gap between

the various actors in Sabang. I believe that an entry point to understanding this gap lies within the tourism scene, or more precisely in that there are differences in how they engage in tourism. Since tourism dependency is on everybody's mind in Sabang, then it stands to reason that any changes that affect tourism are deemed significant, be it for good or for ill.

New Patterns of Local Tourism Production

The Koreans are constructed as the New Others by Filipinos and Westerners. Korean tourism to Sabang does indeed look different from its Western counterparts, and there are differences in behavior, language, and tastes (at least in regards to food). There are likely numerous explanations for this, but I will focus on two processes that may provide some insight into the identification of Koreans as different. In this section I will highlight tourism production, and in the following one I will focus on tourism consumption. These two concepts, tourist production and tourism consumption, form starting points for my understanding of how Korean tourists and expats are constructed as different from Filipinos and Westerners.

Even at a glance at tourism statistics in and from Asia one clearly sees a relatively new and definitely significant segment of the tourism industry – both in terms of inbound tourism and, more recently, outbound tourism. Asia has long received tourists but is increasingly also producing international and domestic tourists. The UNWTO, for example, states that the Asia and the Pacific region has recorded “the fastest growth across all UNWTO regions,” with international arrivals of 233 million, 23% of all international arrivals worldwide, and Southeast Asia receives approximately 80 million tourists a year (UNWTO 2014: 4). The most popular destinations are China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Thailand (UNWTO 2014: 9). Economic growth and increased disposable income, affordable flights, regulated working hours and paid holidays, increases in inter-regional and domestic tourism as well as more open policies on outbound travel in countries such as China and South Korea are some of the reasons cited for the growth of Asian outbound traveling (Teo 2009; UNWTO 2014).

Sabang's tourism is tied to international and global trends in travel,

and the *barangay* has become a recipient for this growing tourist market. This has resulted in intensified local tourism development. Gavin, a British expat in his 50s who works as a diving instructor in a Korean-owned diving shop and has a lot of student-divers and divers from Korea, said to me with emphasis: “This place today: it wouldn’t be half of it without the Koreans.” The Red Sun resort is an illustrative example of such Korean investments in Sabang that Gavin refers to. The Red Sun was opened in 2003 and had 20 rooms from the start, but it was soon expanded to 55 rooms. The Red Sun is the largest of all physical constructions in Sabang, dominating the landscape of the western part of Small Lalaguna beach. The resort offers plenty of employment opportunities since, like the other Korean-owned resorts, it has a large staff. The organization of the resort follows a formal pattern, meaning that there is staff employed for specific purposes, hotel maids for cleaning the rooms, waitresses hired in the bar, and so forth. In smaller resorts, on the other hand, work allocation tends to be non-specific and informal. The Red Sun also employs diving instructors, gardeners, cooks, boatmen, drivers, and administrative staff, and its guests can receive massages or manicures performed by masseuses and beauticians. The resort and its restaurant also require food and drinks, delivered in turn by local dealers. In short, a resort such as the Red Sun is a significant source of local employment. Additionally, the Red Sun resort offers all the amenities typical of large resorts: it has its own swimming pool, restaurant, bar, and diving shop, employing Korean-speaking diving masters and diving instructors to lead the diving courses and tours for their Korean-speaking customers. It should be noted, however, that the resort does not cater exclusively to Koreans but receive customers from all over the world, also offering diving tours in various other languages, as is common among the diving shops throughout Sabang.

Just like the majority of Western-run tourism enterprises, the Red Sun resort is legally owned by a corporation, in this case headed by a Korean expat who is in all practical senses the owner of the resort. According to what several informants told me, Koreans have increasingly become desirable as tenants among locals – the price of their leases tend to be higher than usual, so the land-owning families can make a sizable profit if they have the possibility of providing the larger land areas sought by the Koreans. While leasing one’s land to foreigners is a common and well-

established practice, a new feature accompanied this new tendency of constructing larger resorts; now leasing land to primarily Koreans often requires several family members to join together to lease the land to the entrepreneur. Leasing land on the scale required by Korean investments thus demands family collaboration, a requirement not all families are able to meet. There are thus indications that the control of land is even more a matter for the extended family rather than the individual, if the land is to be used for larger constructions and if the land is to be leased to Koreans. This tendency was previously also seen with Western expats who have arrived later in the development of local tourism, but as Korean enterprises tend to be even larger, then more family members need to cooperate.



Red Sun Resort – the largest one in Sabang.

To be able to profit from these new tourists, local entrepreneurs have adapted to Korean preferences and tastes. Korean products are increasingly offered in stores, and signs and menus in Korean are becoming commonplace. A similar process of adaptation to tourists was certainly undertaken in earlier tourism development when accommodating to the tastes and preferences of the Western tourists, but this now is accepted as assimilated and is rarely reflected upon. Sabang's stores advertise selling German sausages, Dutch bread, or Australian steaks, and signs are com-

monly in English but sometimes in the language of the owner or priority group of customers. However, the new Korean signs, it was pointed out to me mostly by Filipinos but also by Westerners, were as 'strange looking' and odd, as the characters are new and unfamiliar, as are the people the signs are addressed to. The signs in Korean do, however, signal an awareness of the Koreans as potential customers, as a category of tourists that could be gained from, and locals' attempts to accommodate them and their needs.

New Patterns of Local Tourism Consumption

Korean tourists who travel to Sabang often arrive in groups on packaged tours, and tend to stay in Korean-owned resorts. While Western tourists may stay for several weeks or months, Korean tourists often limit their stay to considerably shorter periods of time, often for just a few days. The tendency to travel on packaged tours reflects the Korean travel trend on the national level as well. Philippine national tourism statistics reveal that the Korean tourists are well represented within the group of tourists traveling on packaged tours, where 46 percent of the Korean tourist arrivals indicated they did so in 2004. In comparison, only 3 to 4 percent of the arrivals from USA and from Australia traveled on packaged tours (DOT 2005).

In the past Sabang was mainly visited by independently traveling tourists, backpackers and people who have arranged their own travel and accommodation. The concept of packaged tours is still new. So is the tendency to mainly patronize one and the same resort for not only lodging, but also for meals and leisure activities. This is not regarded favorably by locals, as other businesses can't profit on the Korean tourists' stays in Sabang. Renata, a local Filipina said: "The Koreans, you can't benefit from them." In earlier tourist development, housing for tourists was generally small, and as one establishment provided housing, another diving, and yet another meals. This meant that the income generated by tourists was not concentrated in one and the same establishment. It is argued by both Filipino and Western entrepreneurs that they jointly can access and benefit from Western tourists, as Western tourists shop around, eat breakfast at

one place, lunch at another, and so forth, while this is not the case with Korean tourists on packaged tours, who often choose stay within the resort throughout their stay in Sabang. The pattern of tourism consumption, or more specifically *what* and *how* these new tourists consume, differs from the previous pattern. However, Western- and Filipino-owned resorts also started to offer the option of more all-inclusive services by the end of the 2000s, with their own restaurants, swimming pools, laundry, and massage. Attempts are made by Filipino and Western resort owners to urge tourists to stay within the resorts, by for example developing the restaurant, having a swimming pool, and offering tourists staying at the resort special deals at the restaurant. However, the trend of offering an all-inclusive type of stay is even most pronounced among Korean-owned establishments.



The presence of Korean tourists and expats is becoming an everyday feature of Sabang's tourism scene and signs are put up to attract that particular segment of consumers.

Not all Korean tourists stay in Korean-owned resorts, but the tendency to travel in larger groups and stay for a shorter period of time means they sometimes are considered problematic customers by other establishment owners. For example, one Swedish resort owner felt the need to demand a minimum stay of five nights in order to book a room online. He explained to me that Koreans tourists would sometimes book almost all the rooms for a few nights and by doing so they were preventing bookings for longer-staying guests. For example, if the resort were to be fully booked for a weekend, other guests would not be able to stay for a full week. In his calculations, he had more gain from *avoiding* Korean tour-

ists than from attracting them. Nonetheless, I've had Korean neighbors in Western-owned resorts, who were seemingly traveling individually or with a small group of friends, thus diverging from the general pattern.

Like their Western counterparts, the Korean tourists take diving trips, and excursions to the popular day-trip destination Hidden Paradise, a freshwater waterfall south of Puerto Galera. They golf at the Ponderosa Golf Club and can be spotted at the beaches sunbathing and snorkeling. In terms of activities, these new tourists engage in the same ones as Western tourists. An important aspect, though, is that Korean tourists are only rarely seen at the usual places of social interactions for Western tourists: the pubs and restaurants (outside the Korean-owned resorts). With one exception: the go-go bars. Though the go-go bars are spaces visited by both Western and Korean tourists, the two types of tourists do not interact with each other in the bars. On the one hand, these establishments are generally not places where the customers primarily seek to engage with each other, regardless of country of origin. Korean and Western men also frequent the bars at different times of the night. Korean customers tend to arrive early in the evening, just after the go-go bars have opened (around 7 pm), while their Western counterparts arrive a couple of hours later. These different practices further impede on any potential interactions between the two groups of tourists. On the other hand, bar girls and Koreans interact. I have overheard a couple of these interactions. They were carried out on the neighboring balcony, with drinks and snacks, and iPads and cellphones seemed to be important to bridge over the apparent language barriers. The couples would sit on the balcony for a few hours before leaving.

Sex tourism is thus not something exclusive to Western men, and Korean men are also customers, indicating that commercial sex is interwoven with Korean tourism consumption as well. It reaffirms that sex tourism is an intrinsic part of Sabang's tourism scene. Gavin, the British expat working with Koreans, pointed out that Korean men tend to bar fine the bar girls early in the evening so that they can take their time and 'wine and dine' them, while in his view the Westerners rarely do so. He also argued that the Korean customers "don't kick out the girls first thing in the morning but take them for breakfast," something which Gavin found the Westerners didn't do. In Gavin's perspective was thus a sign of the Kore-

ans respecting the bar girls, as they were treated as more than instruments for sex. There seems to be some differences in how commercial sex is practiced; although commercial sex is sought, there are differences in the customers' patterns of behavior.

These new tourists thus present Sabang and its tourism sector with new pattern of consumption by spending a limited number of days, opting to frequent the resort they stay in rather than outside it, and being involved in collective activities and moving around in Sabang in groups. Their movements have also become a source of amusement among Filipinos and Westerners, and the movements of the Korean tourists are identified and labeled with the classic derogatory terms for tourists such as they are "acting like a flock of sheep" or "moving in herds" (Culler 1988). The Koreans are thus identified as acting in a manner many Western tourists deem as unattractive and showing their ignorance of how tourists 'should' behave. The Korean tourists become symbols of the opposite of what is desired by Western tourists in travel, and they come to represent the antithesis of Western tourists' ideal of independent traveling, including a generally skeptical stance towards the value of group travel.

Some establishment owners have experienced a loss of Korean customers, who now opt to stay at the Korean-owned resorts and eat at the resorts' restaurants. Rita, an owner of a small lodging business, reckons that although her business is still going well, she has seen a decline in the number of Korean tourists in her resort since the start of the Korean establishment in Sabang. When explaining this development she says that: "A lot of Koreans want to stay with their own people. Since I don't know how to speak Korean, they choose to stay with those who can. They want to stay with the same people. It's Korean to Korean only." Furthermore, Western and Filipino entrepreneurs fear that their smaller businesses will not be able to compete with the larger Korean-owned establishments, and there is talk of a veritable "Korean invasion," as the developments often are referred to by my informants.

Many land-owning local Filipinos and Western expats view this development as offering new possibilities in the hope of new group of consumers and opportunities for lucrative land leases on their lands. John, an Australian expat, says he is waiting for an opportunity to sell his lease to a Korean. If this were to happen, John argues, he would be able to move

on, and start a new business somewhere else, in an area that is yet relatively unmarked by tourism. John's thoughts were echoed by several expats I talked to, and when planning a move, they would reproduce the cycle of 'discovering' a pristine beach and starting a small tourism business. The construction of large resorts is seen by many Westerners as having ruined the appeal of Sabang, and Sabang having become overdeveloped; development is contradicting their desire to lead a quiet life by the beach. This process of one category of tourists moving on when new groups of tourists find their way to a tourist site is common: the anthropologist Shinji Yamashita (2009: 193) found, for example, a similar development in Bali, where the Western tourists moved to other locations when Japanese tourists began to arrive. In the Philippines the now famed tourist site Boracay was initially visited by backpackers but now caters to domestic and international package tourism (Smith 2001). However, the Korean tourists to Sabang still present an emerging market, and Filipinos and Western expats remain largely in control over the tourism sector.

The general idea is that Koreans are taking control of the essential tourism industry by the power of capital and connections. The Korean tourists' and expats' behavior and participation in Sabang are systematically constructed as different from those of Filipinos and Westerners, and they are also most often perceived as threatening the established local order of tourism. However, there are some who question this image of the Koreans. Gavin, the British expat working at a Korean-owned diving shop, points to something central when he says: "People say so much about them but they've never interacted with them." Most people I met had indeed a lot of opinions about the Koreans, but, like me, little experience of actually spending time with Koreans. Gavin was initially hesitant to talk to me about his experiences with working with Koreans, as he initially assumed that I too was mostly interested in denigrating them: "I'm the only one who tries to understand them," he said. In his work he spent time with Koreans not only for diving excursions or diving courses, but also for dinners and parties.

Gavin provides a rare counter-narrative when describing his Korean clients at the diving shop he works at as very sociable and generous, but also very shy when it comes to speaking English. He says that, for Koreans: "It's all about saving their face; they're proud and very shy. Since

few of them know English, they keep to themselves: it's simply just too embarrassing not being able to talk with others in English. If people understood that it's due to shyness rather than rudeness, they would be less antagonized." However, the Koreans are criticized for almost everything they do, how they bar fine, talk, haggle, and even how they dive. Gavin was upset by how the Korean divers are blamed for ruining the corals when they scubadive, and says that's not the case, that most follow instructions to the letter. Instead Gavin points out how Western divers bring their fancy cameras to take underwater picture, and when fastening the tripods they not only stick the tripods into the corals, but also, when doing so, they swim too close to the corals and break them with their fins. Gavin's experiences thus offer some cracks in the walls of the general negative stereotyping of the Koreans.

Yet, Koreans in Sabang cannot be labeled 'subaltern'. They are wealthy enough for international travel, engage in expensive activities such as scuba diving and commercial sex. When using the status cards they were almost always placed second to Western tourists, indicating that they are perceived as high up on the local social hierarchy but not held in as high regard as Western tourists. The tourism scholars Theo & Leong (2006: 127) find Asian backpackers in Bangkok to be in a place of indeterminacy; they do not necessarily have a history of being colonized but they racialized. These tourists are also affluent. They create a market on their own. It is the case for Korean tourists and expats in Sabang, as well. But they are marginalized and silenced by the rest of the community in Sabang, but yet held in high esteem. They are however regarded as highly as Westerners, partly due to my inability to represent their voices but also due to the isolation of Korean tourists, at the hands of locals and perhaps also by their own choice.

Sabang offers a tripartite analysis, of Filipinos, Westerners, and Koreans and such an ethnography can give new insights into postcolonial relations. In one overview of tourism and postcolonialism it is argued that tourism can be a form of "critical postcolonialism," (Tucker & Akama 2009: 513ff), that tourism may offer the colonized opportunities to give voice to their perspectives and experiences and negotiate their cultural representations, and the dominant groups, in this case Filipinos and Westerners, an opportunity to hear them. Although I am not able to present

such voices on behalf of the Korean tourists and expats, the experiences of informants such as Gavin offer some insight into alternative interpretations of Koreans. And: “It reveals that any homogenizing categorization of either the hosts or the guests should be avoided” (Teo & Leong 2006: 126). Also, what I wish to clarify is how the Koreans have made an impact in this particular location, financially as well as socially, and how they represent new ways of being tourists in Sabang and that they create a significant market on their own. The recent introduction of Korean tourism to Sabang upsets and challenges the local social order and ideas of sameness and difference between Filipinos and Westerners. In a sense, they challenge the relative stability of identities that have been constructed in Sabang.

New as Tourists?

Tourists are taught in various ways how to be tourists, through different mediators such as travelogues (short written narratives by tourists), tourism journals, travel guides, and fellow tourists. Together these create and perpetuate specific images and fantasies of themselves as tourists and the Other (Simmons 2004). Some researchers have indicated that there may be differences in Asian tourists’ travel preferences compared to those of their Western counterparts (Forshee 1999: 5; Graburn 2009; Thirumaran 2009). Little seem to have been published in international academic literature about Korean tourism-fantasyproduction and what motivates Korean tourism consumption. However, if webpages of Korean-owned resorts in Sabang visited by Korean tourists give an indication of a particular ‘Korean imagining,’ then few differences can be discerned between them and the webpages of Western-oriented resorts. Images of a tropical tourist site, scuba diving, and young Filipinas dominate both. This, together with what can be observed through their activities in Sabang, indicates that the allures of Sabang are at least in part shared by Western and Korean tourists.

Korean tourists are often identified by both Filipinos and Westerners as unsophisticated travelers, that they have yet to learn how to be proper tourists. In 1989 travel restrictions for holiday vacationing abroad was

lifted for South Koreans (Kim 1999: 257). This also shows how interconnected globalization processes and international and national policies impact local practices of tourism (Teo, Chang & Ho 2001). When talking about Koreans, Filipinos and Westerners often returned to the subject how short a time the Koreans had been able to travel. In Sabang this was interpreted as an explanation of why the Koreans' behaviors and movements in Sabang differed from those of their Western counterparts. Their behavior deviates from the Western-based norm, so they are understood to be inexperienced and unsophisticated, lacking international experience (see also Chan 2009). Korean tourists are measured with the yardsticks of their Filipino and Western counterparts, and the Koreans' divergences from that norm are identified as less developed. This calls attention to how tourism is a performed art (Adler 1989) and how "tourism is an artful practice, one that needs to be learnt" (Crouch 1999, in Winter, Teo & Chang 2009: 13). The Korean tourists are identified as not yet having acquired the locally valued behavior and preferences in being tourists in Sabang, as not having mastered the manners and values of the Western tourists (Mowfort & Munt 1998: 130; Yamashita 2009: 197).

Using status cards, I asked the informants to place the cards according to their perception of social status (described in Chapter 1, *Introduction*), the card indicating "Western Tourists" was most often placed higher up (indicating higher status) than the card with "Korean Tourists" written on it, often with reference to assumed greater social status in terms of education, knowledge of English, sometimes also skin color, of the Westerners. This placement was also often accompanied by explanations such as the Koreans "don't know English," "they are stingy, always haggling for prices," or being snobbish "they always walk with their noses up in the air." Their behavior is identified as different from what people are used to. The beach masseuses also noted a difference; as one woman said: "Koreans want a very hard massage. But, like Germans or Danes, they only want a normal massage." Again, the image of Koreans as "tough" was reiterated.

Grace, a Filipina who worked as a secretary at the Red Sun, found her current Korean employer tricky to deal with. She said: "It's been so hard to work with them [Koreans], I don't know how to explain it... I have to, like, make an effort in order to work this kind of work. Working with Korea is really so hard because they are of a different mind, they

have a different culture. It's not easy to go along with them." I asked her: "What's difficult?" Grace replied: "If they want something, they can't wait. They want it in a one click. They're so demanding. He [her boss] wants everything to be settled in that moment. And what is most difficult is how he holds on to money. It's not easy to get him to give you money. If, for example, we need to buy something to the bar. Ay! He demands so many explanations before he can give you money. We have to ask permission first [before buying anything] if we don't have it in stock. He has so many questions before he gives you money. Demands many explanations, and it's very hard."

At the time of our interview Grace, who had worked at Red Sun for a couple of years, believed that the Koreans behave differently because of issues of feeling inferior: "You know, the Koreans they're always thinking that they are in a low place. They want to be up, they want to... Like some foreigners [Western], they are in a top level, and then the Koreans feel they are on a low level. That's why they have an inferiority complex." Grace assumes that the Koreans share the local Filipino and Western hierarchization of tourists, in which Western expats and tourists are identified as having higher status than other tourists. Her assumption further illuminates the construction and evaluation of the common social categories in Sabang, where the Western is considered particularly high in social value. This presumed awareness is also used as an explanation for their deviant behavior; they are assumed to be guided by an inferiority complex.

The Koreans become the New Other, and thus susceptible to negative interpretations and used as scapegoats, so the Western-biased notion of tourist and tourism emerges (Winter, Teo & Chang 2009: 4). The New Others become the medium through which the latest phase of rapid tourism development is made meaningfully locally. In this process, the Koreans are identified as not following the established norms for conduct, and these new tourists and expats confirm the established ideas of 'tourist' and 'expat' by deviating from the norm. The Korean tourists and expats become marginalized, confirming Sabang as a touristic landscape where the (colonial) West is the norm (Teo & Leong 2006).

Changes, negotiations and reiterations of identifications of oneself and others and social hierarchies are central themes in terms of what consequences tourism has had in Sabang. The Korean expats and tourists are

identified by Filipinos and Westerners as not belonging to Sabang, and the Koreans are constructed as not living up to the expectations of how to be a tourist or expat. This deviation stirred up some concern among the established populations of a sense of loss of control over tourism development, the social and cultural composition of the people of Sabang, of notions of how things 'ought to be.' Usually I found my informants to be nuanced in their judgment of tourism and the effects it has had on their lives. Also in the case of the more recent developments, many acknowledge that the Koreans have contributed to the overall development of Sabang and that they are important actors in the local economy. However, there is a gap between the Koreans and the established populations, a distance between them that allows for misunderstandings and mistrust, and the construction of the Koreans as inherently different and unsophisticated tourists.

Renegotiating the Old Other?

The otherwise commonly narrated cultural gap between Filipinos and Westerners is downplayed when my informants talk about the New Others. Instead of repeating notions of cultural differences, suddenly they emphasize similarities – at least in comparison with the Koreans. The Koreans are constructed as a third party, which also consolidates a sense of community amongst the established populations, that is, Filipinos and Westerners, who unite in their evaluation of the New Other. For example, before she started working at the Red Sun, Grace used to work for an Australian expat. She remembers him as having a straightforward way of dealing with conflicts, which she contrasts with her current Korean employer's avoidance of direct confrontation: "If the foreign [Western] owners have a problem, they call you and ask what the main problem is. Then they call everybody else and then you sit down and have a meeting." Grace contrasts that way of conflict resolution with that of her new Korean boss: "Here, no. Here, the Korean does not talk directly to you, or tell you directly what he [her Korean employer] wants to say." In Grace's opinion, she gets put in the middle of the conflict by her employer: "Like me, since I'm his secretary, and if he wants to tell something to somebody,

he doesn't tell them directly. He tells me and then I am the one who is supposed to tell that person." Grace's tone and gestures indicated that she favored the former and found the latter practice less desirable.

Grace's narrative accentuates the notion of a shared past in the Filipino-Western order – which, in facing the New Others, is described as seamless and agreed upon. Her previously mentioned statement shows how “the Western” continues to connote a higher social status. Dealing with conflicts directly or indirectly continues to be a source of disagreements in Filipino-Western relations, but these are now overlooked by Grace. Instead of preferring the indirect approach of her current Korean employer, an approach many Filipinos report they would prefer in face of Western ways of dealing with conflicts, Grace remembers her former Australian employer's direct confrontation in a positive light. Postcolonial ties and shared history become emphasized in face of the New Others. The Koreans are said to be strange and unknown in the light of Western-Filipino mutual understanding and solidarity. In this postcolonial discourse of difference, the Korean tourists become marginalized, and the Western norm maintains its dominant position in Sabang (see also Teo & Leong 2006). But the case of the Koreans in Sabang also shows how cultural stereotypes – and the evaluation of them – change over time. With the advent of a New Other, a greater emphasis on similarities developed between the established Filipino and Western populations.

There are few indications of a pan-Asian affinity in local Filipinos' behaviors toward, or narratives of the Koreans, as exemplified by many Filipinos' refusal to eat 'Korean food,' arguing that it is too spicy, which causes “problems with the stomach.” Western food, on the other hand, such as hotdogs, pizza, and spaghetti, is integrated into the common eating habits. The gap between the Koreans and Filipinos is often considered as being wider, in comparison to the Westerners, and an idea of common grounds in a notion of 'Asianness' is not generally expressed. The idea of shared Asianness, found for example in Bali, where Indian tourists seek cultural affinity with the people and practices of their destination (Thirumaran 2009) does not seem to apply in Sabang. Nor, it seems, is the realization of a search for Filipino cultural authenticity in the classical sense (such as enactments of Filipino culture) of any significance in the Koreans' stay in Sabang. As noted previously, Sabang is not usually visited

for wishes to immerse oneself in manifestations of 'Filipino culture'; it is still mainly a place to scuba dive during the day and hit the bars at night, no matter where the tourists come from.

The local Filipino and Western evaluation of tourists and their behavior can be attributed to postcolonial ordering, where the Western tourists are seen as the norm and are generally held in high status and esteem. They have become the primary symbols for how a tourist should be and ought to behave. This norm is accepted and embedded in the foundations of Sabang's tourism – it was through Western tourism that Sabang's tourism scene developed. The strong negative perception of the Koreans as the New Others reflects the insecurities associated with the introduction of new forms of tourism production and consumption. The arrival of Korean expats and tourists has involved an intensification of the tourism industry: resorts are larger, group traveling has become more commonplace, and there has been a rapid increase in the number of Korean tourists. This has forced the already established populations to deal not only with tourism growth but also with a new group of tourists and expats.

The emergence of Korean tourism can be compared to the initial development of tourism. Filipino locals told me about how they initially considered the Westerners strange, that what they did in Sabang was odd and that the Filipino locals derogatively saw them as "like the Mangyans." I have not observed any indications that the Koreans expats or as tourists in Sabang desire something drastically different in comparison to their Western counterparts. There are some significant differences, however, especially in the pace and scale of the introduction of a new and unfamiliar type of tourism production and consumption. To oversimplify it perhaps, Westerners had a longer period of time at their disposal to become accepted as a permanent presence in Sabang than Koreans have yet had. On a general level, the people of Sabang were also already accustomed to 'Western ways' through their periods of colonization, which both set the Philippine apart from other Asian nations and instilled an affinity, mainly through religion, with the West. In that sense the New Others are new in more ways than the Westerners were when they started arriving and establishing business in Sabang, initiating the process of tourism and transformation.

Concluding Remarks

The concept of post-normative tourism allows for evaluating the effects of tourism, though not necessarily in terms of diametrical positions of positive or negative change of tourism as such (Ness 2003: 33). My informants evaluated the specific case of Korean tourism to Sabang as both positive and negative. While it means more business, it also represents a further destabilization of the local demography. This chapter also shows the flexibility of boundaries of cultural identities.

The businesses Korean expats have set up are large and highly visible, and the emergence of Korean tourists has involved new ways of producing and consuming tourism. This has had the effect that the local population has had to find ways to deal with the transformations and with the presence of new people, language, and behaviors. In this process, locals have emphasized their own right and entitlement to the place, and they have created new a sense of community between Filipinos and Westerners. In this community other notions of differences are downplayed in order to emphasize a common past. In contrast, Koreans are constructed as a threat to the status quo; they represent even more changes. The construction of Koreans as the New Others reflects an uneasiness over tourism growth and what that represent: more people, less of a face-to-face-community, and loss of control of resources. And finally, the conventional depictions of deeply rooted cultural differences between Filipinos and Westerners, depictions often framed in colonialism, are overlooked in the face of Korean tourists and expats. A new sense of similarities between Filipinos and Westerners is created by uniting against a new group. The boundaries are emphasized to maintain one's own self-image, values, and foremost the established way to live in Sabang.

9. Concluding Remarks: Everyday Life in Sabang

I admit it. I have mainly focused on the micro-perspectives at the expense of broader theoretical strokes. But I do want to call into question some of the persisting notions about tourism, such as tourism as a juggernaut that is destructive for local cultures, and the assumed demonstration and acculturation effects tourism has on local population. I also want to question the implicit collectiveness in international tourism of ‘hosts’ and ‘guests,’ the tendency to lock them in as representatives of colonizers and colonized, where in its most extreme formulation tourism is seen as a “form of imperialism” (Nash 1989). But, by avoiding seeing tourism as a result of simple cause (of globalization, and in particular international tourism) and effect (such as a damaged local culture), I have described and discussed how intricate and complex the implications of tourism may be. When broad brushstrokes are avoided and the everyday life of my informants is depicted through a close ethnographic scrutiny, a more nuanced picture of tourism emerges.

This thesis is concerned with how tourism has become embedded in local everyday life, and in particular how people in Sabang react to and reason with the changes associated with tourism. My starting point has been to look at what happens in Sabang, but I do so without preconceptions of tourism and its effects on a general level. Larger processes of globalization, internationalization, and transnationalism are felt by my informants, and they are certainly reflected upon. What has been called a post-normative stance (Wood 1997: 3; Ness 2003: 22) is echoed in my informants’ narratives of tourism. Tourism development has had its benefits, they say, as well as its drawbacks, and my informants also always emphasize that different people have different views and experiences.

Life in a Tourist Town

Sabang's tourism evolved in a socio-historical context of marginalization and, in my informants' recollections, also of poverty, but tourism made Sabang quickly develop into a thriving tourism town. Sabang today may be described as a Philippine "playa del anywhere" (Selänniemi 2001) with its coastal location and tranquil (at least during the day), tropical atmosphere. This does not, however, negate a highly active social and political environment where the locals try to take charge of a development many informants say has spiraled out of control. In this setting people are also living out their daily lives, trying to make sense of the rapid changes that tourism development has entailed. These transformations are furthermore often identified as having intensified since the 2000s, in particular after the increase in arrivals of Korean tourists and expats. Throughout the thesis I have examined what has followed this transition, how people have dealt with these changes, and how tourism is manifested and negotiated in locals' everyday lives.

The lives of people in Sabang today are characterized by their ties to globalization and transnationalism, and, with increased international tourism, new arenas have opened for Filipinos and foreigners to meet. I have focused on the local level, mainly from the point of view of my informants, while also offering glances at a larger scope. In this context, I've examined the everyday interactions, narratives, and actions of the people involved in Sabang's tourism scene. Tourism in its various forms is deeply embedded in all social relations, politics, and economy that exist, all mutually dependent on each other.

Although most of my informants avoid passing general judgments on the consequences of local tourism development, or place it in a "ban or boom" perspective (Mings 1978: 341), they are highly articulate in what they view as the positive as well as the negative effects of tourism. According to the post-normative approach, it is possible to capture the variety of implications of tourism, both good and bad, but nevertheless to position the experiences and narratives of the people who live in the larger context of globalization and transnationalism in the form of international tourism. Many studies have shown that colonial relationships continue in tourism (see for example the edited volume by C.M. Hall & Tucker 2004a). It

is with the help of mainly postcolonial/poststructuralist tourism research that I have approached the lives of the people of Sabang. It is through these thoughts I could capture how tourism is far from a one-way street but in fact a highly complex phenomenon, where livelihood, transnational connections, notions of continuations and transformations of culture, sexuality and ownership intersect.

It should be pointed out that in this particular branch of tourism anthropology cautions have been asked for, as overly broad categories of colonizer/colonized may obscure internal differentiations (C.M. Hall & Tucker 2004b: 18). Analyses based on postcolonial thought may, in the worst cases, be a homogenizing perspective, and may have difficulty in capturing contestation at the micro-level. It is also cautioned that tourism research contributes to a dual world view when focusing the studies on the categories of colonizer and colonized or hosts and guests (C.M. Hall & Tucker 2004c; Tucker & Akama 2009: 515; Aitchison 2001). Nevertheless, the works inspired by postcolonial theory have emphasized and illuminated postcolonial narratives *and* its contestations and resistance in tourism. I have highlighted internal differentiations and learned that people in Sabang have indeed been affected by and have reacted to the transformations associated with tourism in various ways. The ones who have been able to make the most of the opportunities presented by tourism have been local Filipino families who own land, alongside expats. Domestic immigrants and locals who have sold their land have found it difficult to gain entry to the tourism sector other than through employment in tourism enterprises, as they are excluded from ownership of major businesses of their own. Tourism development has contributed to the creation and maintaining of socio-economic stratifications.

Sabang as a place does not hold a simple univocal meaning. It has also been argued that in a tourist town, perhaps more extremely so than in many other places due to its diverse population, different populations inscribe places with different meaning (Fisher 2004; Liehty 1995). Sabang is certainly a place that means different things to the different populations. For some it is a place for home and belonging, or a place for play and leisurely lifestyle, or it means livelihood, while for others it is a place of progress and modernity.

By approaching tourism in Sabang as an embedded (or holistic) phe-

nomenon, I aimed at seeing interconnections between various aspects of everyday life, such as how a vegetable vendor's ability to send her children to school is experienced as dependent on foreign men's wish to travel there to pay for sex and how this in turn has elevated Sabang's political bargaining power in municipal politics. I also learned that what implications tourism has is not (only) a result of an outside force or foreign demand, but is also shaped to fit the local society. Having said this, I should quickly point out that the 'local society' is in this case a heterogeneous one, though the point remains that tourism is of central concern for most inhabitants of Sabang, and, though not always in agreement, they are continuously trying to find ways to best manage it.

I have focused on everyday negotiations and the ambiguities associated with tourism, and found that constructions of boundaries are central. Boundaries are created physically, as in designing places for specific actions and interactions, and symbolic, for example in terms of attaching a particular meaning to a place, behavior, or identity. I have identified three themes as central concerns when examining the everyday negotiations and boundary-making in Sabang: notions of cultural differences, and control and regulation of commercial sex, and entitlement and ownership.

Encounters, Images, and Notions of Cultures

Regarding the first theme, notions of cultural differences, it can easily be stated that in a transnational tourism town such as Sabang, cross-cultural encounters are a part of most people's everyday life. And not surprisingly a recurrent theme within tourism anthropology is that of cross-cultural encounters. I offer an analysis of how the inhabitants of Sabang narrate both a typical divide between 'us' and 'them', and also how these ideas are adjusted, in particular in intimate relationships as well as in encounters with a new group of foreigners, namely the Koreans.

I learned that maintaining a distinction between Filipinos and Westerners is a two-way effort: Filipinos and Westerners jointly uphold a boundary between them. Filipinos tend to describe themselves as more social, caring, hospitable, and less confrontational than foreigners, including Koreans. Westerners, for their part, describe themselves as more developed,

rational, and better educated. In a postcolonial tourism setting, Western tourists can sustain colonial elements in their travels and migrations, seeing themselves as privileged within their Western culture and emphasizing Western superiority (Simmons 2004: 45f), and expressions of such a view are not uncommon among Western tourists and expats. However, the self-claimed notions of Western superiority do not go unchallenged in Sabang.

Filipino culture is depicted by Filipinos and foreigners alike as adhering to Catholic beliefs, conservative norms regarding gender and sexuality, avoiding public confrontations, and having moral norms superior to those of foreigners, in particular when it comes to gender roles, sexuality, use of alcohol, and how to spend one's money. Also, in intimate relationships between foreigners and Filipinas, images and intimate experiences of the Other are negotiated but largely also maintained. Filipinos and foreigners have an interest in upholding such a divided construct of cultures. Cultural differences translate into tangible capital in tourism: cultural differences are central facets of the allure of most of the world's tourist sites, and so also in Sabang, even though cultural performances are not of any interest. Tourism may facilitate a re-inscribing Otherness of culture, but this is also done strategically.

In Sabang people oscillate between emphasizing cultural differences and sameness, but to a large extent the starting point for most of my informants was their experiences of fundamental cultural differences. Filipinos, for example, essentialize their culture, locating it to a specific place in a specific period of time, and they did so with a cheering on by foreigners. "What is at work in these instances is a self-conscious deployment of difference" (Meethan 2004: 20). In Sabang the 'Western' is maintained at a distance from 'the Filipino' and vice versa, and people tend to actively maintain notions of cultural essentialism. West-Filipino relations do thus not seem to compose a new, hybrid culture or hybrid subjectivities. The construction of cultural boundaries also helps each group keep their sense of cultural integrity intact. Local Filipinos are also active in their ways of relating to how others see them; they are hurt when misunderstood and ironic when facing someone who is rude, and they take the moral high ground in regards to commercial sex. They are not passive recipients of a tourist gaze, as much of the earlier literature on tourist-local relations had them pegged to be.

Commercial Sex and Boundaries of Morality

Tourism bears the potential of challenging social and cultural norms, but in rural Sabang, this is a slow process, and many Filipino informants lean on more conventional sets of moralities in a context where 'immoral' commercial sex is prevalent. In my understanding of sex tourism and how it is locally organized and motivated, my starting point is that sex tourism is embedded in the local society and that it should not be seen as a separate issue. The second theme concerns boundaries of morality and immorality, which in many ways are present in Sabang, and most notably so when it comes to commercial sex and gender. My starting point is that if you do not view sex tourism and tourism as separate activities, you can have a more nuanced understanding of the significance commercial sex has in the local community and learn more about the mechanisms that motivate the continuance of something that many of informants argue is immoral and unwanted. I found that the bar girls and commercial sex are in fact accepted as features of Sabang's sexscape (Brennan 2004a), though only as long as they are kept apart from other parts of everyday life.

Postcolonial and poststructuralist thought has guided me in questioning the tendency to hermetically seal in the identities of the actors in commercial sex as 'prostitutes' or 'sex buyers' (Brennan 2004a; Law 2000; Wiss 2005). The bar girls resist a negative discourse of them and refuse to be reduced to their work, an effort the surrounding community rarely recognizes. There is, however, a strategy that is undertaken by both bar girls and the rest of the *barangay*: downplaying the commercial aspect of commercial sex. This is a joint effort undertaken by the local authorities, the go-go bars, the bar girls, and sometimes also the customers. Moral boundaries are set up by the local community in order to keep intact a coherent definition of oneself and one's views of morality, to keep the immoral and moral separated, not only in regards to norms and ideals but also physically by designating certain spaces for activities associated with immorality. Living in a sex tourism town is sometimes problematic, and commercial sex needs to be regulated in order to be made acceptable. But how this should be done is much debated and people have different ideas about how to control it.

Ownership, Entitlement, and the Power to Control Tourism

The third theme that I wish to highlight concerns ownership of and entitlement to Sabang. Tourism development has resulted in a growth of the population, and today Sabang is inhabited by people from all over the world, and the main categories of inhabitants are: local Filipinos with pre-tourism ties to Sabang, Filipino migrants from other parts of the Philippines, Western expats (there are also a few Korean expats residing in Sabang), and international tourists. When wishing to emphasize their belonging to Sabang, local Filipinos have constructed (mainly symbolic) boundaries, identifying themselves as insiders and others as outsiders. In this way they maintain not only a sense of social cohesion in times of great changes but also a notion of collective morality, which is contrasted with outsiders' immorality. In the process of tourism development a division between 'now' and 'then' been made, and tourism has become a main marker of not only economic transformations but also an articulation of who is entitled to Sabang, who has the social, political, and moral authority to decide over how one should behave, and the path of future development.

The discussions of who has the right to own Sabang reveal how sensitive the issue of entitlement and ownership of land is to the local Filipinos. Access to land is essential for anyone to profit from tourism. Foreigners have been able to access land through forming corporations or through their wives, and they have developed tourism enterprises on land lots previously not used for tourism purposes and through the practice of forming corporations. It is not only a question of owning (or having a long-term lease on) land but also what to do with it and how to do it. Differing views between Filipinos and Westerners have led to conflicts, in particular views regarding public and private property.

The newest tourists and expats, those of Korean origin, represent both a promise of future expansion of tourism and also a threat to the established order. With the arrival of Korean expats and tourists, issues of gaining access to Sabang, in terms of control over land are again raised, and the reactions of the established tourism sector to new tourism production and consumption. Boundaries are present in the various ideas about of belonging, and the Korean expats and tourists have not yet gained ac-

cess to Sabang's social life, which also makes them vulnerable to malicious gossip and skepticism. Another effect of this new tourism development is that categories of insiders/belonging and outsiders/not belonging can be renegotiated, and a greater affinity between Filipinos and Westerners is being expressed.

People in Sabang have many and differing opinions on how Sabang should be developed and how the land and environment should be maintained. The issues of ownership and entitlements reveal an active political environment. Foreigners, including Korean expats, gain control over Sabang and its tourism scene through leases and businesses. This has led to a sense of insecurity on behalf of local Filipinos, who fear they are losing ownership of Sabang, and, with the disruption associated with tourism, locals become anxious and try to define who has the right to rule the roost and who don't. The debates and conflicts over ownership shows how the different groups are active in maintaining borders of between themselves and others, but also how these borders can be redrawn.

The debates on control over resources show that neither external nor internal forces are unilateral (C.M. Hall & Tucker 2004b: 6), and that the outcome of tourism development is unpredictable. In Sabang and the municipality of Puerto Galera, tourism has opened possibilities of challenging conventional sites of power and influence and of creating platforms for change, such as new tourism-oriented NGOs. Conventional seats of power and influence are largely maintained, but tourism has offered ways to challenge them. The effects of tourism on local politics are not something forced upon them from the outside; instead the new power relations are actively discussed.

Just as being a tourist can be a process of learning what to seek, see, and do, so can living in a tourist town. People in Sabang are in the process of learning how to handle the various ways their town and lives have been transformed in just three decades. Today tourism is integrated in most aspects of everyday life in Sabang, for good and ill. What emerges from an ethnographic inquiry into tourism and its implications for Sabang is that it is a place where people try to make the best of the opportunities that international tourism offers and that they are ambivalent in regards to the effects of tourism. What also becomes clear is that the inhabitants are not affected equally, nor do they have uniform ideas about how to deal with

issues such as sexual morality, how to be a 'proper' tourist, who are the rightful owners and rulers of Sabang, and who has the mandate to decide how to live in Sabang.

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