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Master Thesis
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Planting Trees in a Forest:

Frictions and Resistance in Puerto Princesa, The Philippines

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Acronyms

ATEC: Asociación de Talamanca para el Ecoturismo y Conservación
DENR: Department of Environment and Natural Resources
DOT: Department of Tourism
GSTC: Global Sustainable Tourism Council
NSO: National Statistics Office
NSCB: National Statistical Coordination Board
PCSD: Palawan Council for Sustainable Development
TIES: The (International) Ecotourism Society
UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific And Cultural Organization
WCED: World Commission on Environment and Development
WTO: World Trade Organization
WTO/OMT: World Tourism Organization
WTTC: World Travel 6 Tourism Council

Abstract

The expansion of ecotourism around the world brings about certain structural transformations as it moves. When ecotourism is conceptualized as frictions, the transformations open up the analytical perspective for a broader understanding. Seemingly dispersed acts can be connected to wider structural shifts in the social reproduction.

Studying global process like ecotourism ethnographically requires a vantage point from which the global can become visible in the local. This thesis examines what happened when the city of Puerto Princesa adopted ecotourism. By observing ecotourism as frictions, participant observation and interviews yield a greater richness in the ethnographic data, contextualizing otherwise peculiar behavior and sentiments.

The adoption of ecotourism gave rise to new constellations of power and culture in which individuals are trying to navigate the new social terrain. Ecotourism has altered the sensation of *place* for the inhabitants of Puerto Princesa. The disruptive transformations of place have created a culture of subtle acts of resistance against the new elites and the ecotourism project they are connected to.

1. Introduction

This thesis is a study of what ecotourism means, how it transforms localities, why it creates resistance and in what forms such resistance reveals itself.

It will describe how ecotourism has transformed the city of Puerto Princesa and the forms of resistance against the transformation of the city. The aim is to show how an abstract claim such as ecotourism can be observed ethnographically as it moves from global to local, universal to particular (Tsing, 2005; Stronza & Jamal, 2008). How these global processes shape local realities and in turn inspire resistance.

Puerto Princesa is the provincial capital of the westernmost province of Palawan in the Philippines. Located in the tropical climate belt, the island province is mountainous and covered in forests. A few towns and smaller villages are scattered along a main road network that runs along the north-south stretch of the island.

Palawan and the city of Puerto Princesa are vernacularly known as the last ecological frontier of the Philippines. Boasting some of the world's premier scuba-diving reefs, a small tropical archipelago, and the world's longest navigable underground river, Puerto Princesa is home to some unique ecological jewels. The city is also home to the indigenous cultures of Tagbanua and Batak people who is estimated to have lived on the island long before both Tagalog speaking ancestors of modern Filipinos and the Spanish arrived.

Puerto Princesa was for a long time a dusty little frontier town known for prisoners, lepers, and malaria. Up until the early 1990s not much changed in the city (Klow & Salcedo, 2009). However after the mayoral elections of 1992, a huge transformation has taken place. The city population soared from 92,000 to 222,000 in less than two decades (NSO, 2010). The city grew horizontally as well as demographically. City budgets have expanded, and tourism arrivals have skyrocketed from around 50 000 a year in 1992 to over half a million by 2011 (Cuevas-Miel, 2012) and likely to reach 700 000 by 2013 (Elona, 2012). The data for this study suggests that this great transformation cannot be attributed to the then new mayor, or to tourism as isolated phenomena. The natural imagery has been present for ages; tourism has been around in the Philippines for a long time, as well as capable leaders to promote it. The timing was crucial for the transformation that occurred in Puerto Princesa. Changes in the Western mode of travel and ontology led to a new niche of tourism, ecotourism. Combined with

the personal narrative of the new mayor, which changed to present a progressive politician who had turned away from his shadier past to combat popular belief of political corruption. Working in symbiosis, the unique ecology, the personal ambitions of the mayor, and the new travel desires all coalesced into an explosive force of transformation in Puerto Princesa.

Depending on what perspective, various conclusions have been made about the transformation of Puerto Princesa, some are positive while others are negative. This study does not aim to deduce if ecotourism is a positive or a negative agent of change, I believe that is for those living with ecotourism to decide. Instead, the study will outline how ecotourism can be many different things at the same time. It can be a universal, a policy, and a practice. Each state becomes meaningful by mimicking one of the other. For example, there can only be a local practice if there is a universal value connected to ecotourism since there has to be some common understanding between the tourist and the destination. This has implications for what ecotourism means and looks like as a practice in one place compared to a universal in another. This thesis suggests that ecotourism can be both a concept and a process, especially as a local practice. It is when the concept becomes a process that changes in the structures of society occur, in other words, when ecotourism becomes a friction.

Tourism is a large-scale movement of people from one cultural setting to another. It is a process that transforms places and those inhabiting those places. A *place* is a location that is uniquely tied between the individuals and the environment. It is a lived reality, not just a spot on a map. Transformations of places are often problematic, altering the conditions of social reproduction, and the physical appearance of a place. These are important topics often left out of the academic investigation of tourism (Ness, 2005).

When a place change, a sudden disassociation is experienced among those who live there, it is not simply an aesthetic impression that change, the inner worlds, which are intimately linked with those who inhabit the place that are forced to change as well (Heidegger, 1996). New contexts had to be invented as well as new references to the new place. For the majority of people, changing ones lived reality or life-worlds, is a riveting and unpleasant experience. Resistance almost always follows transformation (Brighenti, 2011), either psychologically or collectively. When an impersonal process like ecotourism is transforming a place, resistance towards such processes becomes subtle and perhaps even an unconscious practice. There is no clear culprit, so they have to be invented, there is no large construction project to sabotage, and so small acts of disregard will have to replace large-scale protests (Vike, 1997).

This thesis will explore what an abstract claim such as ecotourism actually <u>is</u>, what does it look like and how is it perceived by those with whom it interacts. To study ecotourism as a concrete process, the city of Puerto Princesa, the Philippines, was selected as the vantage point from which to observe ecotourism ethnographically. What ecotourism <u>does</u> is transformation of the locality. And among the things transformation <u>creates</u> are forms of resistance.

1.1 Research Questions

What might be observed if one views ecotourism as *frictions*? Specifically, what are the unintended consequences of ecotourism? And how can seemingly sporadic acts of resistance be connected to ecotourism?

To better answer such wide questions, three paths of delimitation have been chosen to facilitate the understanding.

- **Frictions:** What happens when a western oriented concept of ecotourism meets the local realities of Puerto Princesa? When a process becomes a transformative force on a society and landscape?

- **Spectacular Accumulation:** Why does Puerto Princesa attract tourist? What happens when a city decides to be a capital of ecotourism? How does it go about becoming an ecotourism hotspot?

- **Resistance:** Why is there resistance and why does resistance take a certain form in Puerto Princesa? How can certain acts be described as resistance when put into a large social context?

1.2 Disposition of the text

The disposition of the text is outlined to take the reader "downward" from the global concept of ecotourism, to the local practice in Puerto Princesa. The chain of connections is intended to explain how the structures of ecotourism are being mimicked by Puerto Princesa, which has the effect of transforming the landscape and city, which in turn sparks a mentality of resistance among many of the inhabitants.

The thesis will start by explaining the various theoretical perspectives that exists in ecotourism research and how the thesis diverges from what is perceived as shortcomings of current perspectives. From this the theoretical assumptions of

this thesis will be outlined. The theories are intended to act as frameworks for conceptualizing certain key phrases such as *place, frictions,* and*, resistance.*

The next part of the thesis will develop methodological understandings and challenges. How data was gathered and verified, the site of fieldwork, and limitations will be presented.

The thesis then moves on to the chapter on ecotourism. The intention is to show the reader the genealogy and perceived structures of the global phenomenon of ecotourism. How tourism evolved into ecotourism, the invention of sustainable development, how ecotourism exists in various levels of abstraction.

From this conceptualization the thesis goes on to describe how the city of Puerto Princesa has its' own analogous structures compared with those of ecotourism. That Puerto Princesa tries to mimic the universal components of ecotourism because of the city's engagement with spectacular accumulation.

Following chapter develops the transformations that have occurred in Puerto Princesa as a consequence of spectacular accumulation. The chapter develops the idea that spectacular accumulation acts as a stage-making project altering the landscape and it's meaning and appearances. These transformations then become the root of popular discontent with ecotourism.

The final chapter extends the analysis to the resistance created by the stage making. What the forms of resistance look like. Why people are resisting. How certain acts are connected in the bigger social context as resistance.

The final part presents the conclusions that can be made from observing ecotourism as a friction.

2. Theory

The theories presented below should act as the framework for the analysis. There are countless of theoretical approaches one could take in analyzing ecotourism. This thesis focuses on three theoretical approaches, frictions, place, and resistance.

2.1 Perspectives

Ecotourism is not one "thing", it is a process. For it to exist, it requires two distinct parts, one is the desire to search out ecotourist destinations, and the other is the desire to turn these destinations into commodities in order to capitalize on them. So at the very minimum ecotourism is a two-way interaction. It is a perspective that has been lacking in the academic literature according to Stronza, 2001: 262; Stronza & Jamal, 2008: 316; Carrier & West, 2004: 484, and others.

Mainly, ecotourism as a positive or negative agent of change lay in the eye of the beholder. These two norms of beneficial or disruptive effects are the main ways in which ecotourism is analyzed. The perspective of whether it is good or bad for a community is divided along academic institutional perspectives (UNESCO, 1976:75). The perspectives have migrated from tourism studies in 1970s, when it was mainly an economics/sociological debate. Today however, social anthropologist has joined the sociological strata as ecotourism has mainly landed in the backyard of social anthropologist field-sites (Stronza 2001:264)

Generally, scholars with an economics perspective tend to praise ecotourism as beneficial. Their assumptions are based on the parameters by which economists judge success, such as GDP growth, higher living standards, employment opportunities etc.

The other perspectives hail from the sociological and anthropological camp. The parameters of judging success have thus changed to focus more on cultural survival, symbiotic social relationships, ownership of natural resources, conservation elements, and local participation in decision-making processes. In the majority of cases reviewed, these parameters are not met to a sufficient degree, thus judging ecotourism as disruptive.

2.1.1 Breaking with the tradition

By evaluating ecotourism through variables one would expect to find or lacking, the analytical view is constricted. For example, one would not expect ecotourism to cause widespread resistance if it was truly successful (based on the ability to live up to the variables perceived of as determining success). Thus a study would not initially look for signs of subtle resistance if the variables of evaluating success were found to exist, deeming the project as successful instead.

The perspective taken for this study was thus based on the assumption that ecotourism transforms places by its' virtue of being a process. If the transformations where good or bad from an academic perspective is inconsequential for the study, since those are normative judgments based on the researchers point of view. However, the assumptions hold phenomenological importance, as the local perception of good or bad matter greatly in the manifested responses to ecotourism.

There are a myriad of projects and companies who are referring to themselves as "ecotourism" without any adherence to the main principles of ecotourism (Honey, 2002). This thesis is not an investigation into whether or not Puerto Princesa and what go on there is "ecotourism". It will be assumed that it is, because to the people living there, it is. Rather the point of interest is what "ecotourism" means to people in Puerto Princesa, what are the actual tangible effects of ecotourism.

Instead the focus was directed towards what would not be anticipated from these transformations. What are the unintended consequences of ecotourism? This study then diverges from the comparative tradition of measuring up reality against rhetoric or expected outcomes. And instead observes and analyze how ecotourism has created unintended effects in the city of Puerto Princesa.

To my knowledge, only one other study have attempted to take the theoretical perspective of "Frictions" and applied it to the analysis of ecotourism (Stonza & Jamal, 2008). This thesis makes use of Tsing's (2005) concept and claims that ecotourism causes "friction" as it moves from global universal to local practice. It is the frictions, which are the causes of transformations and resistance.

2.2 Prior Research

There is an abundance of literature on the study of Ecotourism. The list of topics covered by scholars is quite extraordinary, with many facets' being covered (for

a full list see Stronza 2001, Carrier & West 2004). Ecotourism is often viewed as guilt laden development rhetoric from supranational institutions (Mowforth & Munt, 2005), or a new form of colonialism/imperialism (Nash, 1989). Many authors turn their sites into cases of what happens when ecotourism interacts with local cultural practice (Honey, 1999; Smith, 1989). Those views however, often constrain ecotourism into a one-way transaction (Stronza 2001: 262, 267). Either the host community tries to "acquire ecotourism" or some external agent is trying to implement ecotourism in a community.

From the data gather by participant observations, this study draws the conclusion that ecotourism is a joint venture between "sending" institutions (regions, cultural taste, global cooperation, NGOs etc.) and "receiving" destinations. By putting a desire "out there" on a global flow of ideas and have that desire attached to substantial amounts of capital, the global South can act upon their comparative advantage to attract capital by pampering said desire. Such aspect has been lacking in the academic literature, mainly that "host" destinations are not mere passive recipients of tourists, but that they engage in attracting tourists as well (Chambers, 2010: 33).

It suffices to say the tourism and particularly ecotourism has become major hunting grounds for anthropologist. In fact two of the most researched areas in anthropology the last decades is the environment and development (Carrier & West, 2004: 483), ecotourism as will be demonstrated, is a part of both these topics.

Tourism being one of the world's largest industries (WTTC, 2013) clearly has a great transformative effect on societies and cultures. Many questions that pertain to the interest of social anthropologists can be found in the study of tourism (Stronza 2001:261), questions such as power, acculturation, reciprocity, social disruption etc. When these issues are combined with such 'hot topics' as sustainability and development, they converge into ecotourism research, often over places, which historically has been the anthropologists' backyard. Places of the beaten track now become coveted sites for tourism and opening up to the international economy and communication networks (Stronza 2001:264). A substantial part of the prior research on the subject of tourism and ecotourism focuses on three main categories; economic change, cultural and social change (Stronza, 2001:268-272), and environmental change (Chambers, 2010). However, few studies consider the resistance against those changes.

Puerto Princesa is a fairly well studied place. Having become quite the phenomenon in the ecotourism community, many researchers have flocked to the city. Most of the research being conducted is of a natural sciences orientation, some unpublished studies share similarities with this one. I have found very little

empirical data from sources outside my own that applies to the topic of resistance. Some research I would deem outright apologetic and misconstrued about the social situation of Puerto Princesa (Gray, 2008). While other data focuses on a particular part of ecotourism (e.g. economic development, or conservation). Andrade (2008) has recently conducted a study of ecotourism in Puerto Princesa with focus on community development induced by ecotourism through looking at the correspondence of conceptualization and implementation.

Most of the studies conducted in Puerto Princesa can be read as either top-down implementation manuals for ecotourism planners, or focus on one-way transformative power of tourism on the host community. In conclusion, much of the prior research focuses on the positive or disruptive effects of ecotourism in Puerto Princesa, which are viewed through managerial perspectives. Not the responses to those effects.

The research conducted during this study thus branches off from much of the prior research in the field of ecotourism. Resistance to transformation caused by ecotourism seems to have been a blind spot for many researcher, or perhaps, not of interest. However, I believe it to be of great importance, both for the gauging the relative success of an ecotourism project, as well as cloud chamber for bigger social tensions and power issues.

2.3 Frictions

As stated earlier this thesis follows along the theoretical understandings of Tsing's book Frictions. Tsing asks why global capitalism is so "messy", why it rarely expands to new realms without resistance, opposing interest and creative destruction. The argument is that *frictions* occur rather than culture-clashes when a global force such as capitalism moves into a new arena. Globalization then is not a one-way process, rather it is a "collaborative construction" where the global and the local as well as the universal and the particular encounter and engage. Tsing argues that the spread of universalisms is the most obvious component of globalization (Tsing, 2005: 9). Universals have a propensity to travel with ease, and they beckon to "elite and excluded alike" (ibid.). As for example, elites embrace and engage in universals of free-trade, the oppressed can embrace universals of human rights. So too can ecotourism be used by elites for development projects, and by local conservation groups alike. Universals are never fully universal. They are always contested and contextual. Thus ecotourism as a universal is regarded differently depending on where one views it. There are always local interpretations of global universals, which negates the "universalizing effect".

According to Tsing, attention to friction opens the possibility of an *ethnographic* account of global interconnections (Tsing 2005: 6). By acknowledging the different frictions operating around the world, abstract claims such as environmentalism, neoliberalism and development can be studied as concrete processes in the real world. These global forces as we shall see give rise to new arrangements of culture and power when they "rub against" localities around the globe. But it is a very unique and locally specific arrangement that will not be the same anywhere else. Local historical trajectories will inevitably give rise to frictions in the translation from global universals to local universals.

Clifford (1997) among others have pointed out that cross-cultural and long-distance encounters have formed most things we understand as culture. Cultures are continuously co-produced in these global entanglements and frictions. The global process of ecotourism tries to act as an universal practice around the globe (Tsing, 2008:4), but it looses its' universalizing properties in the messy encounter with local practices, in the friction of going from global to local.

This thesis share the same understandings of frictions as a key focal point in understanding how global encounters shape the contemporary world. The limitation of the approach in this thesis is a rather single-sided view of the frictions. Without enough time or space to fully grasp the reverse frictions, how local practices shape bigger spheres of influence, this thesis looks at how the global concept of ecotourism have come to shape the local realities.

2.3.1 Ecotourism's Universals.

Instead of global capitalism (which Tsing analyze), this thesis analyzes ecotourism as a combination of three global universals; Neoliberalism, Environmentalism, and Development (fig.1) (Telfer, 2002, in Stronza & Jamal, 2008:315). These doctrines are in essence cultural wills from the West, an amalgamation of desire to promote a Western ideology around the globe (Wallerstein, 2006: xiii). Ecotourism is a constellation of the three and with them financial assets are intrinsically linked.
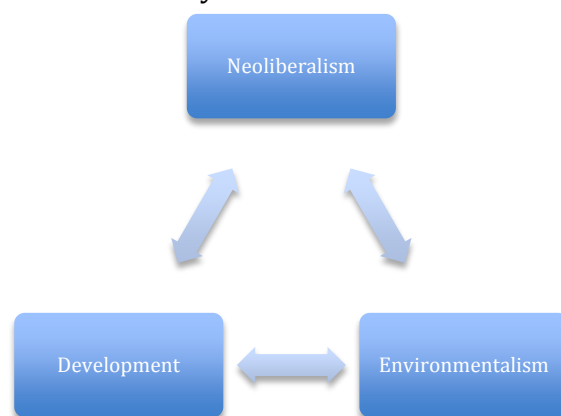

Figure 1.

Neoliberalism is considered as the inclinations of market-based relations between parties. A supply and demand led organization of society based in the values of free-market ideology (Chomsky 1999, Carrier & West, 2004).

Environmentalism entails the increased preoccupation in the West about the current status of the environment. It is a massive field with a wide variety of special interest. Commonly, it is centered on the protection of the environment from harmful activities of the human endeavor (Mowforth & Munt, 2005).

Development in this thesis is the desire in the West to promote certain forms of structural transformations in the global South in order to strengthen such institutions as deemed worthy by the West (Potter *et al*, 2008).

Ecotourism has the component of trade and industry by virtue of being a tourism-centered activity. International tourism is a free-market endeavor (Mowforth & Munt, 2005). There are only a finite number of tourists in the world. Thus tourist destinations have to compete for visitors. Large supranational organizations such as WTO, which heavily promote free-trade, stress the importance of tourism as a deregulated institution (WTO, 1995).

Ecotourism has an interest in environmentalism by promoting responsible use of nature and awareness of the consequences of human impact. Nature is ecotourism's comparative advantage (Costanza & Daley, 1992). As it is a form of tourism particularly dependent on interaction with natural environments, the global South has a comparative advantage. Often the most pristine nature is situated in the global South, especially nature that corresponds with Western Romanticism (Urry, 2011; Chambers, 2010:79). If nature is degrade to a point where it looses its' tourism appeal, the ecotourism industry would collapse.

Development is another key part of ecotourism. The global South has been the main focus of international development over the last 50 years (Potter *et al*, 2008). Earlier decades of development stressed large-scale industrialization and modernization projects like dams and other environmentally degradations activities. In later years the destruction brought on by development programs promoted by the West has become apparent (Mowforth & Munt, 2005:264). Thus a shift towards "non polluting industries" such as tourism has been pursued by many of the supranational development organizations and NGOs. Ecotourism has thus become a viable alternative to large-scale development projects since it encapsulates elements of free trade, environmentalism and development.

2.4 Place

By its virtue of peaceful migration, tourism is a transformative force on the host societies. It can range from acculturation processes to outright colonialism (Nash, 1989). Above all perhaps, tourism transforms *place*.

A place is more than a geographical location; it is an event-filled, lived piece of space and time (Ness, 2005: 120). A place is a fundamental part of the lived reality of those inhabiting it, to which it is deeply emotionally charged, something as a part of what constitutes them as persons (Heidegger, 1977, in Stronza & Jamal, 2008:318). Heidegger argued that *place* is the locus of *Being*, that is, a *place* is a fundamental part of what constitutes the person. A person is embodiment both of the inner workings of the individual as well as the engagement and relationship with the things around it. *Place* then constitutes an important part in the well being of individuals. In particular, Heidegger argued, when a *place* is preserved and allowed to freely develop over time according to its own disclosure, people feel a sense of *dwelling*, the capacity to create a special connection with the place in which they live (ibid. p.319).

Tourism acts as a landscaping agent, altering the sense of place by deconstructing and reconstructing existing places into new places (Ness, 2005). Landscaping is about material transformation and symbolic encoding of a location. When landscaping occurs something must be lost, some change is irrevocable and leaves a place forever transformed.

Landscaping also creates a phenomenological dissociation from the sense of place, the internal displacement felt among a population as the material conditions and symbolic relationships are transformed. In other words, when the lived places change so too does the "inside" of those inhabiting the place.

In Puerto Princesa, the landscaping of place has been a rapid event, utterly transforming the city in less than 20 years. What was once a dusty sleepy town at "the last ecological frontier" of the Philippines has now become a vibrant "ecotourism capital" of the Philippines.

In most cases when an external forces or processes is determined to change a locality, it s encountered by resistance, both in the West and in the global South. Yet there are no publications of popular resistance in Puerto Princesa. Has ecotourism truly been successful and adapted by the population without any reservations about its landscaping properties? In fact, no, resistance to change is a natural response, but it is the clandestine ways in which resistance is practiced in Puerto Princesa that makes it hard to recognize. Resistance against

impersonal processes such as ecotourism does not always accumulate into a popular catharsis of demonstrations and protests.

The processes of landscaping in Puerto Princesa are global in scale. Ecotourism is a polymorphous process that looks quite different on a global scale compared a local scale. Ecotourism then has neither beginning nor end. To someone living in the midst of an ecotourism practice, identifying what or who is responsible for the transformative landscaping is a difficult task. How then, can effective resistance be mounted against the facelessness of ecotourism? When a clear agent or institution is identifiable as culprits of popular discontent, demonstrations and petitions are visible manifestations of resistance. But when no such identifiable source of the discontent exists, resistance takes on a more subtle expression.

2.5 Resistance

Scott (1985) outlines in his book *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday forms of Peasant Resistance*, how a seemingly benign force of transformation (the green revolution) eventually caused some adverse effects for segments of the population. In turn, these segments developed and deployed various subtle forms of resistance towards those who gained the most from the new arrangement of culture and power (p. 138).

This thesis assert that much along the same principles as the rural poor of Sedaka Village in Scott's monograph, find ways of resistance, so too do the "eco-proletariat" of Puerto Princesa engage in subtle forms of resistance as new strategies to combat the transformations occurring in their world.

Subtle forms of resistance or as Scott calls it *Everyday forms of Resistance* are characterized by the struggle between those who are gaining more power versus those who are being marginalized by a cultural shift (Scott, 1985:24). This thesis shares the understanding of resistance proposed by Scott as; "*Resistance is any acts intended to mitigate or deny claims of superiors*" (ibid. p.290).

The subtle acts of resistance are non-coordinated actions, which requires little or no planning to execute. They normally comprise of (but not limited to) passive noncompliance, subtle sabotage, evasion, and deception (ibid. p.31). Multiplied 1000 fold these acts can be a huge disruptive force, dismantling the most planned of policies (ibid. p.35)

These acts of resistance gain their power from the anonymity. It is a shared anonymity endorsed both by those acting out the resistance as it is by those

against whom the resistance is focused. On one hand, the perpetrators in pursuit of personal safety against oppressive government retaliation, desire anonymity. On the other, any governmental recognition of resistance towards their policies is de facto a recognition that their policies are not working (ibid. p.36).

In Puerto Princesa this would have disastrous consequences since the dramatization to conjure tourists relies on the perceived outward success of the ecotourism endeavor. A sudden media storm on the negative consequences of ecotourism in Puerto Princesa could cause the fickle tourists to abandon their plans on visiting, and thus spending money in Puerto Princesa.

In Puerto Princesa the most common form of resistance is perhaps rumors and gossip. Scott argues that gossip is the democratic "voice" in a social context where open acts of disrespect are dangerous (ibid. p.282). Puerto Princesa is notoriously such a place, where publicly discrediting political figures can have the repercussion of assassination (Aning, 2013).

Gossip has long been a staple of social anthropology since Gluckman (1963) considered the social impacts of gossip. Often gossip is considered a form of social acknowledgement between individuals, who's in the "in" and "out", it is an intimate relationship between individuals with social ties. Gossip can also be an unofficial newspaper of sorts, conveying information between different social segments and locations (i.e. rural-urban) (Van Vleet, 2003: 493). Gossip can serve as an important tool for when information is lacking, as Gluckman quotes "fantasy supplements or even supplants fact in order to weave more closely a new motif into the old pattern of grievance against discrimination" (1960: 307). In Puerto Princesa, the new constellations of culture and power have left large gaps of unobtainable information for many. The need to fill the informational void is thus ensured through gossiping. Gossip also serves to maintain unity and social values among people (ibid. p.308). In the face of transformations people feel the need to gossip more intensely as to solidify their relationship in the face of social disruption. The gossip unites a group in larger society versus another group, in Puerto Princesa this translates into the subordinates versus the elites. Gossip does this by allowing group members to reify their traditional beliefs through excluding the elites in participating in the gossip (ibid. p.313).

Gossip is popular in Puerto Princesa because of its' shielding capabilities. The effervescence of gossip allows the gossiper to stay anonymous against the dominant elements of society (Scott, 1990: 140).

Rumors as closely tied to gossip, however, they are often not directed at a single person per se. They are an important form of anonymous communication, i.e. "I didn't say that, it was a rumor". Scott argues that rumors thrive in social

circumstance where events of vital importance to people's interest are happening but there is only ambiguous information to rely on (ibid. p.144). In a social climate such as that of Puerto Princesa where corruption and danger are present, rumors and gossip flourish.

Rumors and gossip are the most common forms of character assassination employ by subaltern groups. They act as a balance to undercut the moral authority of those who transgress cultural values (Scott, 1985:235), it is a way to level the political and economic hierarchies created by the new forms of culture and power brought on by Ecotourism. Boissevain (1998) (in Chambers, 2010), has identified a range of potential expressions and strategies employed by host communities when resisting tourism. Two of them have direct correspondence to this thesis. One as mentioned above is rumors and gossip. The other is ritual. Using rituals as subversive outlets for maintaining an identity of the community that does not conform to the one proposed by the elites, is, as we shall see, practiced in Puerto Princesa.

3. Methodology

This study is a qualitative research. Most of the data used for analysis has been collected during an 8 weeks participant observation fieldwork in Puerto Princesa, Philippines, coupled with on-going email correspondence. The data on Ecotourism and the theoretical outlay were all collected from second hand sources through a literature review.

When the great bulk of the data being presented acts as the base of my analysis, I believe it is important to be transparent about the way the data was created. Therefore a lengthy monologue follows over the study in its final format that you are holding.

3.1 The site

Puerto Princesa is the capital city in the province of Palawan in the Philippines. The Province of Palawan is a long stretch of islands situated in the western most part of the Philippines, stretching from the tip of Borneo to the southern parts of Luzon. Surrounded by the East China Sea and the Sulu Sea it has a unique ecological profile and bountiful marine life. Vernacularly known as the "last ecological frontier of the Philippines", Palawan is a province with little infrastructure development.

The city of Puerto Princesa is an unconventional city to most western understandings of urbanization. It's big in spatial terms, about the size of Tokyo, yet very sparsely populated. In fact, most of the city is forested mountains. One highway runs through the city, along which several villages are situated. The city proper is an urban sprawl straddling two main roads with the local airport in the middle. The city is divided into 66 Barangays ("districts", the smallest administrative division in the Philippines) 35 of which are classified as urban and 31 as rural. Besides the highway and the city proper, most roads are not paved and filled with potholes (even the highway isn't fully paved at parts). The city slogan, "a city in a forest", is a fitting depiction of what Puerto Princesa looks like outside the city proper. The city also claims to be "the ecotourism capital of the Philippines".

3.2 Methodological Approach

The problems which presented itself during the literature review, the apparent lack of local perspectives on ecotourism (Stronza, 2001: 262), that tourism is somehow imposed on host destinations, not sought after, and that the remarkable change created by tourism doesn't create resistance, are hard to find a solution to from books. Especially when most of the literature seems to have neglected the analysis of these problems.

To fully understand the complexities of modern day ecotourism, a site where fieldwork could be pursued had to be selected. The site chosen was Puerto Princesa, the Philippines. To fully come to grips with the lack of analysis, empirical data had to be obtained, fieldwork including participant observation were the chosen methods. Besides the lack of prior research into the topics, both local perspectives and subtle forms of resistance (which are intertwined in many cases) are phenomenon that cannot be truly gauged without a qualitative approach on the data gathering. By lengthy observation the discrepancy between what people say they do and what they actually do, can be overcome.

Ethnographic methods are by and large often a pragmatic approach (Agar, 1980; Crang & Cook, 2007). There is initially a plan for approaching the problem one tries to solve. However, the dynamic of social fabrics and the lacking local sensitivity one has before entering the field, force the researcher to become flexible and pragmatic. Certain "moves" in the ethnographic terrain leads to dead-ends, new and constant re-evaluation of what is happening is necessary. Therefore my methods have been sporadic and pragmatic, ranging from observation, open/structured interviews, participation, "deep hanging out", friendships and animosity. Ethnography is an art; the art is to be able to move in spaces where you are clumsy. To understand the subtle changes in atmospheric chemistry when words, people, faces, ideas, jokes and rumors enter and exits, was my methodological objective.

Limiting myself to a set of methods would hamper the scientific progress. In many aspects this study was epistemological anarchy (Feyerabend, 1978). I believe that this methodological pluralism is at the core of ethnographic endeavors, and of course affects the outcome of the research. Yet I share the views of Feyerabend, that this outcome actually progresses science by removing limited vision and increasing sensitivity to complex real world situations.

3.3 Informants

When I arrived in Puerto Princesa some initial contacts had been made with Filipino academics, however, no one could concretely describe ecotourism in Puerto Princesa, nor tell me where to situate myself to gain a perspective.

In response to this I started to talk to a wide array of people, from ex-pats to local fishermen. What I found after my first two weeks was that there was a very fragmented view on what ecotourism was to my informants. As a pragmatic move I decided that the variety of my informants social and spatial positions actually was a great source for data gathering in the initial stage of the study.

Eventually I ended up with a handful of key-informants, which shared with me cultural intimacy and helped me to contextualize accounts as well as suggest how I should proceed for answers.

I did not divulge the resistance part of my study to any informants. Partly because political resistance is a dangerous activity in Puerto Princesa, and partly because I didn't want them to "help" me out by "finding" resistance. I asked about organized resistance in some instances, which they gladly told me about.

Instead ecotourism was the focus of our exchanges. Transformation is hard to know about unless one has be situated in the field for a long time, I had not, thus my informants accounts of how things had changed are the basis of my data. My informants (and perhaps my unknowing informants) actions, gossip, and subtle changes in tonation, whispering, facial expressions all served as indicators of unhappiness and resistance. This might seem quixotical, believing things to be there that are not; most of the time indicators are not evidence. However, when juxtaposed with the social context, a plausible correlation can be inferred.

3.3.1 Ethical Considerations

There is always an ethical dimension with qualitative research. The informants in this study have all been anonymized so as not be linked to sites of research; where the possibilities of the informants being connected to the sites, the sites have also been give aliases. The main methodological aspect of this research has constantly been to never jeopardize the informants' social standing.

The data being presented in this thesis is probably not going to be appreciated within government circles of the city or the elites in the society. This could put many informants in a precarious situation. They're outspokenness with me can come with a big impact on their jobs. I treat this fact considerably through out my analysis and am well aware of the effects it could have. This has also been a driver in the anonymity of the informants so as no harm would come their way from what is being published.

Throughout my participant observations and interviews I have been clear with my informants on who I was and what I was doing. I have had the consent of every individual I have interviewed to use the data I gathered in this text. In certain cases I have been explicitly told not to use information, and have not done so either as this could be harmful to the informants well being.

3.4 Data Sampling

During fieldwork and laced with years of academic schooling, I constantly bumped into the problem of holistic fallacy, seeing connections between sporadic and decontextualized events and data (Agar, 1980: 76). To combat this brooding issue, theoretical sampling was conducted. When a new piece of data was gathered, it was cross-referenced with another informant occupying a spatially different location. For example, when hearing a rumor among the workers of the eco-park, I would later convey a fragmented part of that rumor to other informants, who would explicate and fill in the missing gaps. Working in a large site like Puerto Princesa this approach helped to compare decontextualized pieces of data to evaluate if they held importance. By comparing accounts from various sources such as but not limited to, Tagbanua, government officials, eco-park workers, rangers, students, ex-pats (non Filipinos), and tour-guides, themes emerged and theoretical saturation was achieved (ibid. p.124). However, no theoretical assumptions were shared with informants. By open-ended interview questions, a substantial array of data was obtained, as well as leaving room for the informants to develop on certain areas that were deemed significant. This approach was consciously selected to overcome confirmation bias.

3.5 Written Representation

3.5.1 Who is representing?

When doing ethnography the researcher is confronted with a series of dilemmas. The transitional phase of entering the field is a well-documented epitaph stemming from Malinowski (Malinowski 1922:4).

The unruliness of the sites washed over me as a wave. The size and scope of the metaphoric ball of yarn was daunting to say the least. What string does one start pulling? After a while the anxiety came to pass and the terrain became navigable. Yet the end product of this ethnographic undertaking faced other problems. Geertz argued that doing ethnography is the writing down of the visible and often very complex reality (Geertz, 1988). How does one transform an unruly experience of an unruly reality into an authoritative written account (ibid. p.83)? How can one depict an emic perspective through text? I present no clear answers to these questions. Instead I hope to show through a reflexive monologue, how I reasoned regarding these issues. What I have produced is unquestionably my

interpretation of someone else's interpretation (it's turtles all the way). However, I am not a completely antiseptic human, my interpretation has been shaped and molded by the subjects and forces I have studied (DeWalt 2002:56). I came as a semi filled sheet, which has been filled and colored over many times during my stay. At what point does my interpretation end and theirs start? It would probably been quite unfruitful to pursue such a mental maze race, so I'll leave it with a simple acknowledgement. This is not completely mine, not exclusively theirs, but something mixed by frictions of awkward interaction into an assemblage of observation, impressions and analysis.

3.5.2 Literary Montage

The way we write ultimately shapes the readers view on the worlds we are representing in our ethnographies. This text will show connections. My aim was neither to neither deduct nor induct, but to "abduct", to take various events and see where they lead, what might come forth when prodded and juxtaposed with each other.

The end product of this research is this document and with that certain problems did arise of how to depict or write down what I researched. It made no sense writing this as a linear expression, there is no start and no end point in what I observed, at least not one I could pick up. Because there is no totality or objectivity, there is no point in writing about an objective society or culture as if it *did* exist. Rather than perpetuating this norm of linear writing, which would be fictional, or alternatively become a nihilistic deconstruction (Morris 1997:315), which would be equally tedious for the reader, I will present this ethnography as a literary montage (Crang & Cook 2007:177). This style of academic writing might be unconventional, yet it serves well when trying to represent the complexity of my sites.

Literary montage is particularly convenient when attempting to demonstrate larger theories through small acts, when connecting seemingly disconnected events or instances with a macro perspective. It allows for details to be place on top of the social background, and I believe, creates a bigger picture.

3.6 Impossible objectivism

In mainstream society and even academia there is a peculiar belief that there is such a thing as *a culture*. Yet when we venture out to the field, this pure culture is nowhere to be found. Comaroff and Comaroff explicates this eloquently when they say that studying a 'culture' is no longer about going 'there' and studying 'it', because "'it' would always be simultaneously supralocal, translocal, and local, simultaneously planetary and, refracted through the shards of vernacular cultural practice, profoundly parochial'" (Comaroff & Comaroff 2003:151).

So if a totality is thus impossible and purity not achievable, what have I as an ethnographer studied? I have studied assemblages, mixes of ethics, policies, power, and desires, conjoining down at a specific locale at a short period of time. What I have not researched is a society or culture in its totality. I have seen glimpses of a discourse, a struggle over meaning, which has global dendrites connecting people in a clasp over meaning, and why one meaning is trying to prevail.

3.6.1 Superficiality

With this comes the risk of standing in the crossroads between positivism and mysticism (Cook & Crang 2007:201). For this reason I believe that theories play an important role in combating mysticism, yet I tried not to fall into positivism by relying on one theory and attempt to pile up enough evidence to prove it right and thereby miss everything else that might be happening (Feyerabend, 1978). All this aligns with the wider paradigmatic move within social anthropology towards superficiality (Ong & Collier, 2005) and social science in general (Brante 2001:175). A move towards superficiality does not mean neglecting details. In fact I will be analyzing many details in this thesis. I have tried to write in a way that the importance of the details should not outweigh the greater understanding. Superficiality is that the social world is too unruly and confusing to make predictions about. One can scope causes but to prophesizes future developments is often out of reach.

3.6.2 What's significant and what's not?

The quest to sort the meaningful from the trivial is a constant brooding problem for anthropology (Geertz, 1973: 15). But isn't it I, the ethnographer who create the significant? My informants flicking out a cigarette into the forest deemed as an eco park might be something insignificant to him, and who am I to tell him it is not. To him it's a discarded piece of filter, he has no use for it and the forest can have it. To me that becomes a significant action in understanding the effects of a policy. His nonchalant extinction of the cigarette signals to me that he does in fact not care about nature "the way you are supposed to" according to ecotourism. Why does he not care? A lacking culture of conservation? Not exactly, since this place is rife with propaganda and decades of campaigning for the conservation of nature, even school children are being taught these fundamental concepts. Maybe he didn't go to school? Perhaps he doesn't leave his Barangay very often, and thus was not exposed to the propaganda? Or maybe to be crass, he doesn't give a shit, he has other things on his mind, girls, money, gossip? The point of the matter is that the data and events that are chronicled here will be deemed significant on behalf of my educational discretion (Agar, 1980: 48). Perhaps not always on my informants point of view.

3.7 Limitations of the fieldwork

When I was collecting data I faced two major limitations in my approach, namely language, corruption.

3.7.1 Language

The official statistics of Puerto Princesa claims that English proficiency is above 80%. However, when one ventures out from the tourist circuits the level of English drops significantly. As I proceeded with my research it became clear that the language barrier was going to become an obstacle and my budget did not allow for me to have a 24/7 interpreter at my side. Clearly this has impacted the data I have collected; surely some meaning has been lost in translation. Another issue was the inclination of people to say what they thought I wanted to hear rather than their actual opinions. I learned to tell this by a slight change in facial expressions. Normally a smile would be adorned when telling me "official" information, while a more serious and frowning facial expression would accompany personal feelings. To overcome these limitations I decided to act naïve and use the "mhmm" answer followed by silence to further instigate explanation on the informant part (DeWalt 2002:133). When I interviewed people in government positions I resorted to a quick "charm offensive" which included a overtly positive inclination towards the government agencies/programs, compliments and praise, all of which required me to tap into the official discourse and manipulate keywords/phrases to give the appearance of being a "friendly". Although I did have ethical qualms about acting as a "spy" in government circles, I felt I was being patronized and not awarded transparency when taking a more critical approach.

3.7.2 Corruption

Another major obstacle was the rampant corruption. Corruption is hard to put ones finger on. Yet its' presence is clearly felt and being whispered about daily. It makes it increasingly hard to trust official statistics (as the case of English speaker e.g.) since statistics can be used as a powerful political tool to simplify a complex reality (Best, 2001). The predominance of corruption at all levels of society in Puerto Princesa was something many of my informants were adamant about. They saw at it as a fact and deemed me foolish to question such understandings. Coming from a Western, safe, low corruption society, at first I acted clumsy and probably burned down a few bridges from the start. But when having been warned over and over again about the personal dangers in my research I decided to take a more clandestine approach and try to limit my presence publicly. Puerto Princesa is a dangerous place for anyone investigating the powerful. Many journalists have been murdered over the last decades and very recently a prominent radio broadcaster was shoot dead in broad day light for speaking out against political interests (GMA News, 2013). The assassins

where later connected to the then sitting governor of the province who had since escaped to Vietnam (Merueñas, 2012). The price for this assassination was an absurdly low sum. My informants told me that the powerful officials in Puerto Princesa "is the law", and that someone like me, a white backpacker looking tourist, "can easily fall down a cliff when doing a jungle hike" hinting at an easy way to discard victims. I have considered if these were mere stories for amusement or truth. Having seen the newscasts and heard it from a wide array of sources, I decided to act upon them as if they were truths. Obviously this limited me both psychologically and investigational in my research.

4. Ecotourism

As noted earlier, the intention is to use ecotourism as a lens through which to observe and explain the present and the transformations that have occurred in Puerto Princesa.

Thus, it is necessary to understand what ecotourism is, how it came to be, and why it came to Puerto Princesa. My attempt here will be to depict in a rough form of the "genealogy" and structure of ecotourism. This will then be juxtaposed against the historical trajectory of Puerto Princesa to demonstrate the process at work.

4.1 Background

The growth of ecotourism in the last decades has its' ideological roots in a western cosmology, yet affects the global South most (Cater, 2006). Ecotourism has evolved out of mass-tourism, and has in the global South been widely hailed as the future path of development (ATEC, 1991:1). But mass-tourism has a patchy history as a tool for development, and so too, does ecotourism seem to share certain shortcomings as it is spreading across the planet.

In essence tourism was, and is, treated within the global financial institution community of the West (IMF, World Bank, UNDP etc.) as yet another primary produce of the global South, much like coffee, cacao, bauxite etc. (West & Carrier, 2004: 484; Cater, 2006: 35). The logic was that if the global South utilizes their comparative advantage of location and natural imagery desired by tourists, they could then capitalize on these advantages transforming the profits into productive regional investments, creating more economic growth.

By the 1970s it was already noted that tourism did not offer a panacea for the global South's lacking economic growth (Turner & Ash, 1975). Much of the profits gained from early tourism in the third world were drained back out to the first world by tour operators and hotel chains, leaving the global South with the by-products of mass-tourism rather than the profits (Mowforth & Munt, 2005: 49).

The massive growth in tourism over the last decades has created a range of other problems, from environmental, social and cultural to even epidemiological ones (Mowforth & Munt, 2005: 90). This has led to the creation of new forms of tourism attempting to grapple with the negative consequences of the industry, claiming to be alternative options to conventional mass-tourism. All of the

alternative forms of tourism embrace the concept of sustainability in one form or another. Sustainability, it seems, has become the latest "buzz-word" of our time. It is a word, which has tremendous amount of power, prestige and above all money, connected to it, as Sachs puts it "Can one imagine a more powerful motive for forcing the world into line than that of saving the planet?" (1992: 108. in Mowforth & Munt, 2005).

Ecotourism is portrayed as an especially advantageous form of development, both for the developers (national policy planners and the global institutions) as it does for those who want to develop (the global South) (Stronza, 2008: 4). It relies on the isolated and pristine natural world, e.g. the frontier or the wilderness, raw materials which are common in the global South due to the impeded industrial development during the previous decades. Many countries in the global South are characterized by a deep indebtedness, with mainly primary industries such as agriculture and mining as collaterals for the debt. The glimmer of hope presented through tourism, and in this thesis ecotourism, is perceived of as a solution to both their financial woes as well as addressing their environmental and social concerns regarding conventional mass-tourism (Mowforth & Munt 2005:252).

4.2 How tourism evolved into ecotourism

Tourism is a big field to study. It requires a global ethnographical account both to describe and understand it. Travel has in the 21st century become the largest peaceful movement of people ever witnessed (Stronza, 2001: 171). The connections encompass the entire globe. In such meshwork of interlinking places, a birds-eye view is by far nothing simple to achieve. Yet it is necessary in order to understand how ecotourism operates and what the inherent logic might be. Granted that this brief overview will serve as most rudimentary, it is still a good way of fixating the flows of ecotourist in order to understand their impact on Puerto Princesa.

Tourism is in it's essence a desire to travel, Erve Chambers poetically puts it as "if home is where the heart truly is, then it might be equally true that travel is where the imagination has thrived" (2010:9). As recently as 2012 the WTO/OMT estimated that one billion of us traveled for tourism purposes. The number speaks for itself; a desire to travel is truly within humankind. Philosophical notes aside, a desire is not enough to get anyone to travel, other prerequisites must be achieved in order for travel to be attainable.

One of the simplest models for accounting the patterns and ways of tourism was devised by Valene Smith (1989: 1). The model is by no means satisfactory for

explaining all of the myriad forms of tourism, but it will serve well for an overview on the genealogy of ecotourism. It can be stated as a formula:

T (tourism) = L (leisure) + I (discretionary income) + M (positive local sanctions).

By assigning values to the variables of the formula, a reasonable pattern emerges in the development of tourism to ecotourism. To understand the developments in Puerto Princesa we have to understand the historical developments in the Western world, where most of the tourists come from, and where the discourse of ecotourism is largely shaped (Cater, 2006).

4.2.1 Leisure

The development begin in the post World War II decades in the Western world. The growth in sustainable tourism (which ecotourism is a large part of) can be connected to the shifting patterns of employment and consumption in the Western world. These patterns are in turn linked to shifting modes of production. After the Second World War the Fordism style mass production mentality started to change. The economic benefits of mass production started to wane as costs of production rose due to a more organized working-class and an expanding middle-class.

Since the end of the Second World War, leisure time has grown exponentially in the West. Workweeks decreased from sixty hours to the normal average of 40 hours (Smith 1989: 1). Industrial standards such as wages, unemployment benefits, and paid vacations increased, taking larger and larger chunks out of the profits (ibid.). Around this time many industrial producers decided to move their means of production to areas of the globe where the comparative advantages such as labor where cheaper (Dicken, 2011). This shift marked a move away from manufacturing in the West and towards a growing service sector as the main mode of employment. Fordism's mass-production and consumption gave way to post-Fordism, a form of flexible accumulation, modes of production and consumption (Mowforth & Munt 2005: 26). With the less physically demanding service sector, the holiday became a time for self-improvement and reflection instead of relaxation and recuperation from a heavy job.

4.2.2 Discretionary Income

The variable of discretionary income refers to the part of the personal income that is not used for personal essentials such as food, clothing, housing etc. (Smith 1989: 2). This variable has increased substantially from 1960 to 2009. The average American had for example, in 1960 $2020 as per capita disposable income, which in 2005's dollar value amounts to $10,865. In 2009 the per capita

disposable income had risen to $35,124 per capita (valuing at $32,387 in 2005's dollar) (Whitehouse, undated, p.367). It is important to point out that these statistics may not tell a completely true story, since the income gap between the wealthy and poor in the Western world has also increased. However, according to Smith (1989) the new generations in coming of age in the 1980s were a more frivolous population, earning money for play rather than savings or investments (p.2). When this is translated into tourism it equals more people traveling more often.

4.2.3 Positive local sanctions

This variable is probably the most interesting to social anthropologist since it deals with cultural expression in modes of travelling. Positive local sanctions are the factors in the guest's native culture that promotes him or her to seek out traveling. In the late 1970s when post-Fordism started to become the dominant mode of production there were also major shifts in self-identification of the "new" middle classes. A move away from group identity towards individualism occurred in the West. The patterns of tourism changed in response to these individualizing practices. The new middle class of the service sector had a rising income. Their jobs were not as physically taxing as the previous middle classes manufacturing jobs. Leisure time was now spent as a time for personal reflection and self-improvement. Travel to places that could define oneself, just like many other consumer products, as distinguishable from the general public became the new vogue. One seeming part of the explanation for these new practices among the middle classes might be due to an overall change in attitude towards the elite classes in society. During the Fordist era, the middle and especially the working classes had a disdain towards the practices of the elites. The 1960s was epitomized by a strong class awareness and distinction. The rise of the new middle classes in the 1970s and 80s lacked such disdain and distinction and there was a desire for upward mobility. The upper-middle classes wanted to emulate the practices of the upper classes, among which mass-tourism was perceived as a vulgar experience. Bourdieu (1984: 41) characterizes this shift as *Distinction,* a willingness to distance oneself from other classes in society. The new middle classes tried to distance themselves from both the working class and their own class by adopting travel patterns similar or at least aspirational to those of the upper classes. There was an amalgam of distinctions, the shift was not solely towards upper classes, but also a shift away from what was perceived as the upper classes wasteful and excessive life-styles.

The development of post-Fordist modes of production aligns with a greater cultural shift, the transition from modernism to postmodernism. With that shift a major identity change occurred. The process of modernization had started a growing individualism among people in the West (Friedman 1994: 212). Society moved from structures of *Gemeinschaft* (close communal ties and little

geographical mobility) to structures of *Gesellschaft* (loose intra-communal ties and high levels of geographical mobility) (Tönnies, 1957). The individualization process started to bloom during the postmodernist era (Freidman, 1994: 83). The wider cultural characteristics of this period of time are among others; a mentality of individual self-development, a new middle class morality, and meaning being organized around the autonomous individual (ibid.).

Ulrich Beck formulated another important characteristic of the 21st century, the risk society. The consequences of late industrialization Beck argues are risks and hazards that can no longer be pushed into the future (1992: 2). This has spawned a reflexive modernization in which a population is becoming more aware of their own impact on the future survival of society.

The shift towards individualism and risk awareness are of special interest for the development of ecotourism. The desire to become a unique and distinct individual sent the new middle classes into a search for products and issues that would allow them a distinction. In the 1970s the growth of the green movement in many parts of the West was spurred with a newly found interest in nature based travel. What had once been considered an area of arduous travelling – nature – was now being actively searched out (Mowforth & Munt 2005).

To understand what have created these positive local sanctions, relying on material determinism alone is not enough. A historical account for the growth of sustainable development in which ecotourism operates must be taken into account to understand how a social field emerged in which consumers started to consider ecotourism as a viable form of travel. Ecotourism is to a large extent the institutional expression of certain sets of late capitalist values that occur in a specific political-economic climate (West & Carrier, 2004: 484). It is thus necessary to situate ecotourism in a broader social context to understand how it manifests.

4.3 The invention of sustainable development

The growth of the new middle classes can be linked to development of new socio-environmental organizations (Mowforth & Munt, 2005: 146). The growing interest in the West for all things regarding nature and conservation has a long history that reached popular attention around the early 1900s in America (Castells, 1997:128). In the 1990s over 80% of Americans and nearly 2/3 of Europeans considered themselves "friends of the environment" (ibid. p.125). The Sierra Club is often nominated as the prime instigator of America's nature tourism (Honey 1999: 10). The Sierra club organized trips into the Californian

mountain range from which they derived their name in order to *"take club members into the Sierras to show them the natural wonders so that those persons could become active workers for 'the preservation of the forests and other natural feature of the Sierra Nevada Mountains"* (ibid.). The United States was also a forerunner in the creation of a vast national parks system of protected areas. With the advent of the motorized transport, the parks visitors' numbers grew enormously. However, the popularity of the national parks in the United States soon became detrimental for both the preservation of the parks and harmful to its wildlife (ibid.).

It was in the 1970s that the environmental discourse for the first time struck chord with a majority of the population in the West (Castells, 1997:129). The history of the development of environmental concern is not within the scope of this thesis, however I wish to show on a few events in the last decades of the 20th century that I believe had a catalyzing effect in the adoption of pro-environmental concerns.

Perhaps the first major impact on the development of environmental consciousness came with the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (ibid. p.136). In her book Carson outline the detrimental effects of pesticides on especially birdlife while chemical producers and public officials refused to act on the damages created. The book has been hailed by posterity as the launch point of the American environmental movement (Glausiusz, 2007: 34).

In 1970 the first Earth Day was observed in various larger cities in the Western world. A year later the UN secretary-general Un Thant held a defining speech on Earth day where he popularized the concept "spaceship earth" referring to the planet as a closed system in need of our stewardship. In 1972 the UN held its first major conference on international environmental issues, known as the Stockholm Conference. The conference marked a turning point in the development of international environmental politics (Baylis & Smith, 2005:454-455). In the same decade an influential book written by Paul Ehrlich called the *Population Bomb*, became a best seller and an important contributor to the understanding of humanity as out of control. Ehrlich claimed that the population growth and technological development had put mankind on the brink of extinction. A new global awareness was being forged that centered on the ecological fragility of the planet and the problems of industrialization (Potter *et al*, 2008: 118). During the same decade *Greenpeace*, the Vancouver based organization was created and would come to heavily influences the public discourse about sustainability (Castells, 1997:132).

In 1987 came another important report, the Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development, which consolidated the understanding that the

current progression would not be sustainable in the future (WCED, 1987). The Brundtland Commission report coined the now widely famous concept of sustainable development as; "that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987: 43).

In the 1990s the concept of sustainable development started to coalesce into myriads of NGO's (Non-governmental organizations) preoccupied with environmental concerns. The emergence of wider reaching communications technologies like the Internet manage to "shrink the world" (Dicken, 2011: 80-81), and to increase the time-space compression (Harvey, 1989). Under these conditions many global South NGOs could thrive. A NGO forms a vital part of civil society, which can be summed up as a form of "third sector" somewhere between the state and the marketplace (Potter *et al,* 2008: 119). The merits of NGOs are their sensitivity to local conditions. With the rise of global communications the promotion of local conditions became increasingly facilitated and expanding. Consumers in the West now started to become exposed to global South conditions on a more daily basis, not just through massive campaigns like LiveAid, but in their supermarkets and magazines. In 1992 the Earth Summit was held in Rio de Janeiro. The UN managed to bring together 180 countries and firmly entrenched the issues of environment and sustainable development into a political issue through the ratification of Agenda 21 (ibid. p.118).

These historical events among many other similar have according to Castells been aided by the growth of the environmental movement. The movement is accredited with the new perspectives on the relationship between economies, society and nature, thus also giving rise to a new culture of environmentally conscious individuals (ibid. p.126). This new culture can be described as a form of environmental ideology. An ideology in which ecotourism has found fertile grounds (Stronza & Jamal, 2009:313).

4.4 Ecotourism and the global South

Today tourism has reached the 1 billion mark of tourist arrivals per year. The industry circulates about 9 percent of the worlds GDP and 1 in 12 job globally (formal sector) is a job related to tourism (UNWTO, 2013). International tourism to the global South from the developed parts of the world was increasing as much as 6 percent annually around the turn of the millennium, while the increase in intra-developed world tourism only increased by 3,5 percent (Honey 1999:8). The developing world has become a large tourism hot spot and is increasingly taking a large share of the tourism pie. This has made ecotourism into an attractive endeavor for the global South.

Tourism has long been a vital part of global South development. Cheap labor, land and advantageous climate all worked as strong incentives to attract foreign capital investments in the tourism industry. The rise in mass tourism became synonymous with the four "S's" sun, sea, sand, and sex. Many of the host countries started to become disappointed with the stereotypical tourists. Even though tourism was hailed as a "smoke-less" industry, and a path towards development for many countries in the global South, in 1980 The Manila Declaration on World Tourism proclaimed the stern statement that "tourism does more harm than good to people and to societies in the Third World." (ibid. p.9). In a response to global South's dismays and a growing crowding of domestic natural tourism in the developed world spurred by the growing green movement, between the late 1970s and the mid-1980s overseas ecotourism started to develop into a full fledge industry (ibid. p.11).

The economic aspect of neoliberalism has meant that poor tropical countries like the Philippines and specifically rural regions of the country that have few resources or industrial development can not compete on a global market place. Their comparative advantage is their isolation and "untouched" wilderness. For ecological reasons, rainforest, beaches and hot tropical climate have long had positive position in the western ideal of wilderness and isolation. For such places, like Puerto Princesa, ecotourism looks particularly attractive (West & Carrier, 2004: 484). The environment then becomes just like any other commodity, offered and consumed on a global market place (ibid.).

The global South is often synonymous with development initiatives. Currently much development is centered on rural development, in order to prevent a rapid urbanization process (Potter *et al*, 2008). Over the next decades these rural regions of the world will also be expected to safeguard many aspects of the "global commons" such as biodiversity (ibid. p.443). Ecotourism has become one strategy in global South's development since it is assumed that ecotourist mainly visits rural areas, the money they spend is assumed to stay within the local community, and ecotourist pay user fees and park entrance fees which can increase the resources for future environmental protection (West & Carrier, 2004: 484).

4.5 Levels of abstractions

The model for ecotourism proposed consists of three spaces (fig.2). The spaces are political spaces through which agents move and influence the discursive field of ecotourism. The agents can range from organizations to individuals to ideas. The fields are fluid entities in constant shift as the various agents change.

The common theme for all of the spaces is ecotourism. Ecotourism runs through the vertical structure of the model. By analyzing ecotourism an ethnographic perspective of global processes and contested definitions and ambitions will emerge. That is, how the local practices relate to and draws upon global universals and national policies for their effect.

To create an ethnographic account, a location from which a vantage point can be set up to observe how the elements of ecotourism articulate with other through the different spaces has to be identified (Shore & Wright, 2011: 14). The rapid transformation that has occurred in Puerto Princesa gives it a unique position from which to observe Ecotourism, since the practice differs from the policy, which differs from the universal. By *studying through* the structure it becomes clear that the local practice diverges from the global universal.
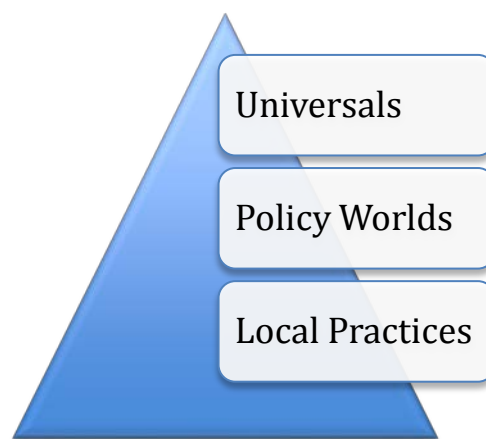
Figure 2.

As ecotourism moves from universal to local practice its definitions and social effects increase. Logically when ecotourism is regarded as a global universal the definition has to be rather general and restricted so that the various agents have common understanding about what is being conceptualized.

In the local space ecotourism is not bound by such restrictions as it has moved through the policy process and is now a governing instrument ready to be applied. Those who can potentially utilize ecotourism have also increased. In the global domains, certain language and standards are in place to restrict a broad definition. As a local practice, however, ecotourism becomes much more flexible and thus more available to people who use it for their own purposes. It still derives meaning from the universal for legitimacy, but as a practice might look foreign to its appearance in the global space.

At the local space, ecotourism becomes a very diffuse as a concept, varying greatly between different locations. As long as some line of connection to the

policy or the global ideology exists to identify the practice, most activities can be pitted into ecotourism by utilizing key concepts in the discourse.

4.5.1 Global Level

In the global space, the realm of supranational organizations such as the UN, WTO, The International Ecotourism Society, etc. ecotourism is an ensemble of predominantly neoliberal economic ideology, environmental regulation and science, and Western developmental philosophy. These three universals pose a generalist perspective on ecotourism. The understanding of implementation is that it follows certain rules that are applicable worldwide. Neoliberal consensus on market-based relations is assumed to be universal, environmentalism proposes a globalist scientific understanding that by default is considered universal, and development ideology draws from the other two universals to equate sustainability and economic progress as universal values. Together the three universals coalesce to what pertains to be an ecotourism ideology.

4.5.2 National Level

In the national and regional spaces the universals become policies. Policies are notoriously difficult to define as having beginnings and ends (Shore & Wright, 2011: 10). The creation of national or regional policies is a mixture of global universals and local practices. Policies are not linear processes emanating from policy makers "down" to the public. They are contested political expressions created in various semantic and social terrains (ibid. p.1). Policies then, are fused in the dialectic between global and national/regional spaces and in the dialectic between local practices and national/regional spaces. Ecotourism as a policy develops in these dialectics. Global universals propose new alternatives of action for national governments, which then through knowledge acquired by local sensitivity appraise the various benefits of aligning with the global universals through creating a policy.

The policy then enters into a "guideline" for local practices. It has to be retranslated to fit with the given local reality. It is the flexibility of a policy as a governing instrument that allows for its successful application. It is not a law, nor a regulation, but a directive of desirable action (ibid. p.13). It is the local practice inspired by the policy that causes the social transformation.

4.6 Towards a working definition

To save the reader some frustration, quite bluntly there is no single way of defining ecotourism. Ecotourism is a broadly and loosely defined concept with a plurality of meaning. In fact, Fennell estimated that there are over 80 working definition of the concept "ecotourism" (2001). The myriad of definitions makes it

evident that ecotourism is a contested term when it comes to a definition of praxis. Since it is a Western-constructed concept, and that most international bodies and organizations is heavily Western influenced and operated, the contestation of definitions should mainly arise at the local/cultural specific level (Cater, 2006:36). Since this thesis argues that ecotourism is conceptualized quite differently depending upon where one observes it, a common broad definition is required for an initial conceptualization.

In general ecotourism revolves around environmental sustainability, bio-diversity, cultural and social sustainability, and educational aspects. Weaver (2002: 15) sums ecotourism up neatly as:

> *"Ecotourism is a form of tourism that fosters learning experiences and appreciation of the natural environment, or some component thereof, within its associated cultural context. It has the appearance (in concert with best practice) of being environmentally and socio-culturally sustainable, preferably in a way that enhances the natural and cultural resource base of the destination and promotes the viability of the operation."*

This summary of such a broad concept is hardly an optimal tool for analysis of local context; it can be read as everything and nothing at the same time. The pragmatic aspect of implementing such all-encompassing definition into practice is quite rare, yet the rhetoric is pervasive. An anecdote from Honey (1999) tells of the dilemma that occurred when The Ecotourism Society (TIES), which is a membership organization promoting ecotourism, in 1991, tried to come up with a working definition for their raison d'être, ecotourism. The society came up with what is now also a broadly accepted definition of:

> *"[Ecotourism is] Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people"* (TIES, 1990)

Years later, in 1998, one of the founders of The Ecotourism Society told an interviewer that "Afterward, we looked around at each other and said, 'Okey, who among us is really doing what we have just defined?" (Honey, 1999:21). Besides the apparent grandeur of such definition, the TIES, seems to take very lightly on what "well-being" means, as well as the concept of "nature", perhaps among the more difficult words in the English language.

In an attempt to concretize ecotourism and for the future purposes of this thesis, three different understandings are proposed. These definitions are not my own, but those of various actors in the ecotourism field.

The macro level of ecotourism is the realm of supranational organizations like TIES (The Ecotourism Society), World Bank, UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization), UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), WTO (World Trade Organization). These organizations are the ones setting the global stage for ecotourism, and to a great extent; they define the practice and set up the guideline of how to practice ecotourism "the right way". Ecotourism among these macro organizations is viewed from a managerial perspective. By adopting these macro perspectives, practical guidelines, which should ensure a successful ecotourism project, are laid out for governments and practitioners. In the UNDP's *Ecotourism Development: A Manual for Conservation Planners and Managers*, the perspective is presented quite explicitly:

> *"We now recognize that in order for ecotourism to be successful, conservationists need a greater understanding of business considerations; likewise, developers need a greater awareness of the management mechanisms that are necessary to ensure the sustainability of the activity."* (UNDP, 2004:4)

The latest offshoot from the UNWTO is the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, which tries to implement a global regulatory practice for, among other activities, ecotourism. The perspective follows along similar rhetoric as UNDP. To fulfill the criteria of sustainable tourism a destination has to "*demonstrate sustainable destination management*" (GSTC, 2012). This criterion we can read further down in the text, is in place to "*help consumers identify sound tourism destinations*" (ibid.).

The prevalent perspective among these organizations and institutions are two-folded. It is part managerial, and part trade liberalist. Trade liberalization is effectively endorsed by most of the global institutions in their recognition of Agenda 21.

Agenda 21 is a global action plan created at the 1992 Rio Summit in Brazil. It sets out the priorities for 21st century sustainable development. Tourism is specifically mentioned in this Agenda as offering sustainable development. Both governments and businesses are given certain key areas to work on in order to promote the growth of new forms of tourisms as a development generator (Mowforth & Munt, 2005: 105). Critique has been made that the Agenda 21 section dealing with trade only amounted into an evasion of key trade and environment issues, rather than solutions (Arden-Clark 1992:13, in Mowforth & Munt, 2005). The critique is focused on two points; first Agenda 21 endorses GATT rules on free trade and deregulation, suggesting that only through trade liberalization will sustainable development come about. Secondly it endorses the GATT´s position, which believes that environmental costs should be externalized from the industry (ibid.). In other words, the market should dictate the practice,

and any harmful by-products of such practice should be dealt with by national or regional governments, all the profits to the market, all the costs to the people.

What can be summarized from the extensive documents on the topic of ecotourism from these global organizations and institutions is that their perspective is one grounded in theoretical and abstract understandings of the world. This perspective is quite natural at such macro level since there is no way of having intimate knowledge about every location specific condition on the planet. An abstract perspective then becomes the most viable option from which to gaze at the workings of ecotourism. The inherent flaw in such perspective is that as with any theory, it is only as good as the data you put into it. Ignoring or missing vital data could jeopardize the entire perspective and operational abilities of the organizations.

Flaws aside, the managerial and liberalist perspectives permeate down from the macro scale all the way down to local/micro scale perspectives of ecotourism. Since it is through aligning a project to these values promoted by these powerful organizations, which holds a great sway over the public tourist opinions, that a project achieves financial success. To put it in an analogy told to me by an eco-entrepreneur; "if someone makes everyone believe that eating peaches is the best thing in the world, you'd look like a chump trying to sell apples".

4.6.2 National
In the national context ecotourism is often perceived of as a policy. Policies are considered a plan of action to pursue by the government in which strategies are outlined to achieve certain goals (Dowling & Fennell, 2001: 5). In this context ecotourism peddles between abstract theory and a perceived national desire for a practice. In the Philippines the national policy on Ecotourism came to be through a line of events culminating in the creation of the *Guide Laws for Ecotourism Development in the Philippines.*

The defining sequence of events was when the Department of Tourism (DOT) together with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) conducted a national workshop in August 1999 to develop a national framework for ecotourism. The result was a structured national policy and strategic guidelines on ecotourism. Following the UN General Assembly's designation of 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism (IYE), in 2003 the Philippines employed ecotourism as strategy for sustainable, safe, development in the tourism sector in accordance with the *Visit the Philippines Year* to promote itself as an attractive destination.

In the *Guide Laws for Ecotourism Development in the Philippines* the definition of what ecotourism is supposed to be in the Philippines it reads:

> *"A low-impact, environmentally-sound and community-participatory tourism activity in a given natural environment that enhances the conservation of biophysical understanding and education and yields socio-economic benefits to the concerned community".*

The definition is quite similar to that of the abstract macro scale. As the name of the policy indicates, it acts as a guide for local practitioners to develop their ecotourism business along lines consistent with the overall national desire, as well as a global/macro conceptualization of what ecotourism should be.

The global tourism industry is easier to understand if one views it literally, as an industry. There are producers (host countries), consumers (tourists), and products (destinations).

There is an implicit pragmatic concern in mimicking the macro definition. By striving towards a "product" that will resemble what the consumer (the ecotourist) desires, the success of an ecotourism endeavor is increased. If the products are successful, that would entail more consumers would choose the Philippines as a travel destination over other destination on the global market place, thus ensuring future profits for the nation as a whole.

4.6.3 Micro

The micro realm of ecotourism is the location specific destinations that are pursuing various forms of ecotourism projects. This thesis is concerned about one such location, the city of Puerto Princesa, the Philippines.

The policies laid out for the creation of an ecotourism hotspot derive their backing in the Republic Act No. 7611, also known as "The Strategic Environmental Plan (SEP) for Palawan Act". The act is a declaration of a policy for the protection, development and conservation of natural resources. Through the implementation of plans, programs and projects, enhancement and preservation of the environment shall be paired with the pursuit of socio-economic development goals of the country (Republic Act No. 7611, 1992). The participatory process of all the sectors of society "(including tribal groups)" in natural resource management is stressed through out the document. Rhetorically, the policy document mimics that of the national policy document and the ideological underpinnings of the macro perspective of ecotourism.

4.7 Rhetoric vs. Reality

In the macro and national perspectives rhetoric is all there is to ecotourism. There are no physical projects at these levels. Ecotourism exists as an abstract

entity. Even the policy document composed for the micro level is similar to an abstract perspective. However, ecotourism is also a practical and physical process. There are roads built; resorts constructed; tour vans rushing; boats humming; cities sprawling with migrants seeking jobs; garbage, shopping malls, restaurants coming from and catering to tourism. In the middle of all this are people living their lives. Many of these people did not have a voice in inviting ecotourism to their home. They are told by the ecotourism managers (politicians, eco-entrepreneurs, and media) that this will benefit them.

To fully understand what ecotourism is at this local perspective one has to understand what the people living with ecotourism feel and think about it. When ecotourism is no longer abstract, it gains unique characteristics based in location specific contexts. Thus one cannot say "ecotourism is this…. in Puerto Princesa" by comparing the reality to the rhetoric. Such view limits the perspective of what ecotourism can be to what the theory says it should be. As has already briefly been shown, ecotourism can be different perspectives to different people. The remainder of this thesis is an attempt to show what ecotourism looks like, how it has transformed local understanding of, and created resistance, in Puerto Princesa.

5. Puerto Princesa

It's raining. I'm walking up the gravel path towards the park. My daily walk takes about 30 minutes from the front desk to the entrance of the park. Today it's an especially pleasant walk through the dense forest. The rain is pouring and smattering on my big poncho. My sturdy five-finger sandals are soaked and the thin layer of rubber gives the illusion of walking barefoot on the rocks. The path is a winding uphill trek. I wouldn't call it a road, the 6 feet wide path is highly uneven and large rounded riverbed rocks had to substitute for paving. Most of the rocks are loose, they are the reason why I choose to walk everyday rather than going on a bumpy minibus ride, since due to my height I have to hunch and still knock my head on the roof. My informants tell me that no tourist ever decide to take the walk up to the park. They prefer to ride up and experience an ordered nature with cut lawns and domesticated birds, well one type of bird, pigeons. To someone like me, a tertiary educated western, so immersed in the environmental discourse of my time, this is how you are supposed to experience nature – being in it – in its entire wilderness. Wilderness might be a stretch on words, I am after all walking on a man made path and every few hundred yards or so an abandoned farmstead sit along the road, partially reclaimed by nature. Yet still it perplexes me that an enterprise built upon the appreciation of nature, located in a city which advertises itself as an Eco capital of the Philippines, attracts tourist that doesn't seem to care to much about experiencing a tranquil walk in one of the most unique biospheres of the planet.

The park I am heading towards is an eco-Park. A huge tract of land situated in the foothills of the Saint Paul mountain range on the island of Palawan. The park is a newly developed ecotourism attraction, boasting with Asia's longest zip-line along with a canopy walk, jungle survival training, fish and bird feeding, and a butterfly farm. I'm heading up here because I am curious about the location of the Pista y Ang Kagueban – the feast of the forest. A yearly gathering where the mayor of Puerto Princesa comes up with hundreds of volunteers to plants trees.

5.1 Ecotourism

Ecotourism has become one of the main economic and social activities in Puerto Princesa. The city has officially branded it self with slogans such as "city in a forest", "eco capital of the Philippines", and "the last ecological frontier". It has publicly stated that it considers tourism as the main path to future sustainable development (Ponce de Leon, 2004: 364). The main goal of the ecotourism project is considered to be the establishment of competitive and sustainable programs to attract domestic and international tourists (ibid. p.219).

The following is a brief overview of what are considered to be the city's main ecotourism developments. These developments are part of what this thesis labels "stage-making", they are attempts to set a stage for ecotourism to play out on. It is a stage that should resemble the preconceived understanding of what ecotourism should look like. The way to fulfill this objective is to mimic the global discourse to which international tourists are familiar. In other words, to make the drama on the stage appealing enough to attract an audience.

5.1.1 PPUGR

The Puerto Princesa Underground River is a natural subterranean river system stretching some 8 kilometers into the St. Paul mountain range. Located in the barangay of Sabang it is the biggest tourist attraction in the city. Through extensive lobbying the river was recently named on of the 7 natural world wonder under the "Asia" section of the program (Seven Natural Wonders, 2013). However, this "Asia" part of the nomination is often removed from the marketing purposes, and it is simply referred to as one of the 7 Natural World Wonders.

The river was for a long time administered by the local barangay, and who ever had a boat and was willing to take tourist to the mouth of the river and even inside it would do so for a negotiated price. With the fame from the recent nomination, the city government decided to step in and regulate the lucrative ecotourism business of the river.

Only people living in Sabang are allowed to work in the city tourism program for the PPUGR, and get paid a salary instead of whatever price they could haggle with the tourist before (Ponce de Leon, 2004: 279). The city government has also set a maximum capacity level for the river in order to preserve the unique environment and endangered species of swallows and bats who reside in the cave system. In the new administrative regime, tourists have to apply for a permit at a local office in Puerto Princesa city, and then they have to charter one of the myriads of tour vans driving the two-hour journey up to Sabang. Once in Sabang, they have to get another permit, then hire a boat captain to take them to the beach entrance of the river. At the entrance they have to pay a local guide to take them into the river in a dingy.

The city has managed to find a great way to generate tourist money by implementing this procedure, and at the same time, in their words, ensure carrying capacity of the river.

Unofficially however, these are contested matters. Some Sabang locals were displeased about the new arrangements. They felt like the government was encroaching on their profits. Making it harder for them to capitalize on the river (Dressler, 2011: 535). Two independent biologists interviewed argued that the

carrying capacity set by the city government were nowhere near sustainable. And along the road to Sabang, locals of several villages were worried about their children being killed by the speeding tour vans that come rushing by several times a day.

5.1.2 Honda Bay

Honda bay is located along the north/eastern borders of the city. It is a scenic reef with small islands scattered in the bay. Honda Bay is also the location of the very exclusive Dos Palmas resort, infamous for a terrorist kidnapping which took 100 tourists and ended with the death of 20 tourist and 22 government forces during the attempted rescue operation. A historical incident that is much disgruntled within the government circles, as it depicts Puerto Princesa as perhaps not the safest tourist destination.

A popular tourist attraction in Puerto Princesa is to go island hopping in Honda Bay. Usually the tourists would hire a tour-operator to handle the logistics for a trip. From Puerto Princesa the tourists are hauled in the standard tour van to the pier of Sta. Lourdes where scores of bancas (local outrigger boats) are waiting to take them aboard and ferry them to the various islands. The trip takes almost a full day, during which the tourists visit three of the islands.

5.1.3 Pambato Reef

Each island has it's own niche. Two popular islands are Pandan island and Pambato reef. The later is actually not an island but a floating platform from which tourists could go snorkel in the nearby reef.

On one of my visits to the reef a huge orange jellyfish had swerved into the designated snorkeling area. Quite jolted I surfaced and climbed up on the platform to tell one of the staff. When uttering the word "jellyfish" and trying as best as a I could to mimic it's movement which clearly freaked out a Korean party, the staff looked very seriously at me and declared with a loud voice for everyone to hear, that there was in fact no jellyfish at all. When I then pointed out the orange blurry shape moving below the surface a staff member quickly jumped in the water to investigate only to surface a little later nervously smiling that it was just a plastic bag. Just a bright orange plastic bag the size of a child, which the staff decided not to collect from the pristine reef. Apparently it is very important not to spook the tourists, which could spread the word that Pambato reef might not be safe.

5.1.4 Pandan Island

Pandan island is located further out in the bay. It is a gorgeous white sand idyllic island with it's own reefs. Outfitted with several kubos (Filipino style native huts) and a diner/bar. The beach is littered with tourists drinking from coconuts and tired boat captains sleeping on their anchored bancas.

5.1.5 Iwahig

Iwahig is a large tract of land west of the city proper. It is originally famous for the penal colony that carries the same name. The penal colony is an unfenced prison where the well-behaved inmates are allowed to live outside the confines of the prison (sometimes with their families) to farm the land and make little trinkets and knickknacks for visiting tourists.

To the prisoners confined inside the main prison building, tourism is still a lucrative source of income. They regularly arrange rehearsed and well-choreographed dance shows, where 20 or so prisoners perform to the latest top radio hits.

Outside the prison colony Iwahig is home to an alligator farm/zoo, popular to many tourists. Besides the farm/zoo tourists can enjoy firefly cruises in the mangrove swamps or visit the Eco-Park.

5.2 Frontier Culture

Palawan, the province of the Philippines where Puerto Princesa is located, is vernacularly called the "last ecological frontier" of the Philippines. What does such statement entail for a place like Puerto Princesa? What are "frontiers" and what sort of culture develops under these conditions?

Tsing (2005) tells us that a frontier is a place of activity that makes human subjects as well as natural objects (30). The frontier is a social construction situated some distance from a cultural center. In the case of Puerto Princesa the cultural center would be a national Filipino character of sorts. The frontier only exists by the space differentiation between two poles. It is a diffusionist project where the frontier has to be conquered and tamed by processes emanating from the center. Lévi-Strauss suggested that civilization is the process in which we turn the raw to the cooked, or nature into culture (Lévi-Strauss, 1970). Palawan and Puerto Princesa are in the process of being conquered by ecotourism to be turned into a safe commodity. To be turned from wild to domestic where culture and modernity can penetrate.

The frontier is often times a place of ambiguity and dangers. Where the long arm of the law has not yet gotten a firm grip and social institutions are not always recognized. Frontiers are spaces to be tamed, a space where expansion can occur, where environmentalism, free trade and development can expand. The frontier is a space but not a place (Tsing 2005: 32). Rather it is an imaginative project able to mold both processes and places. Altering the emotional ties of those inhabiting it and transforming them into something new. A place, is a location of lived realities, of limited transformations (Ness, 2005), in contrast, a space is void, waiting for something to fill it with civilization and culture, either as buildings or as in this case with an ideology of environmentalism.

Puerto Princesa was long considered a frontier. The city existed in obscurity until the mid 1990s. First being settled by the Spanish during its imperial days, the city served as a natural harbor for a long time. Eventually a penal colony was formed in one of the Barangays. The location of a penal colony attests to the frontier mentality surrounding Puerto Princesa in the past. The penal colony is an open prison, where the inmates have to farm and create their own subsistence. A penal colony is something that normally located in the frontier. England initially designated Australia as a penal colony on the frontiers of the empire. The idea is to locate the prisoners in an area where escape would be a harder way of life than staying in the colony. Prisoners as a social anomaly need to be relegated to the peripheries of society.

Another telltale sign is that Puerto Princesa used to house a leper colony. The parallels are close to that of prisoners. The lepers are people not desired in society. Without means of genocide or social expulsion a colony in the periphery is preferable to manage the anomaly.

Located in a tropical climate and densely forested Puerto Princesa was also notoriously famous for being a malaria-infested city. A decease from nature that is often considered prevalent in backwards regions of the globe is a fitting pathogen for the imaginative project of frontier making.

5.2.1 Conquering the Frontier

Together prisoners, lepers and malaria solidified the national imagery of Puerto Princesa and Palawan as a frontier. However, a frontier has to be conquered. Most initial stages of the conquest of frontiers follow along the lines of natural wealth extraction and governmental incentives for the movement of population from more densely populated areas to the frontier. In Palawan nickel mining and illegal logging has both been endemical, causing great natural destruction. Similarly during the 1970s the NARRA project (National Resettlement Rehabilitation Administration) was initiated to incentivize people to move to Palawan to become subsistence farmers. Land was allotted to whomever used it in a productive manner. Today besides tourism, agriculture still makes up the largest industry in Puerto Princesa.

The second wave of frontier conquest is the one currently occurring, the ecotourism-wave. When the global political climate shifted in the 1990s towards a stronger emphasis on sustainability and environmentalism, Puerto Princesa had the optimal prerequisites to pursue those goals. By being relatively unpopulated with some unique geological features, beaches and rainforests, Puerto Princesa all of a sudden had a strong comparative advantage in the tourism industry.

The frontier is a perfect space for ecotourism. Ecotourism is an industry that tries to serve conceptions about the untouched, the pristine and isolated nature. For all but the most dedicated ecotourism the frontier is the perfect balance between nature and culture. The wilderness cannot be completely "wild" for a viable tourist endeavor. Some forms of amenities must exist for most tourists to enjoy nature.

From the data gathered on the tourist industry, it can be deduced that there exist a scale in the form of tourism development. From mass-tourism that is heavily capital intensive to wilderness tourism that hardly require any forms of capital investments thus no returns for the industry (Mowforth & Munt, 2005). Ecotourism falls somewhere in the middle of this scale, requiring little capital

investments yet promising high yields. The pull factor such as nature needs little alteration for its appeal to the ecotourist. Some infrastructure development is necessary, like roads airports, boats etc. hotels, lodges, and hostels can be on a smaller scale and are often small business oriented, ensuring domestic creation of these amenities. Tourist guides can be employed from local population whom often know the natural landscape well. Puerto Princesa thus have benefitted substantially from its' frontier position. Allowing it to capitalize on current fads and positive local sanctions in the sender countries from which the tourist are coming.

The frontier culture of Puerto Princesa is a space where entrepreneurialism has thrived. Free-trade, environmentalism and development entered Puerto Princesa through ecotourism. The frontier culture has created human subjects that have a "new" outlook on nature which have been created as a "new" object.

Nature has been transformed into a commodity in Puerto Princesa. This is not to say that it rules out any spiritual or venerable consideration for nature as will be shown later. Nature has gained a new meaning as an economical entity, something that can attract investments in the form of tourists. Entrepreneurs are gathering to construct nature parks, hotels, even casinos. Land has become a valuable commodity in this new understanding of nature. Beaches and forests are coveted by both the tourist and those who seek to prosper on the tourist desires.

There are two narratives about the new human subjects. The official narrative claims that the subjects are being transformed into sustainable conscious individuals and communities. People who cherish nature for its own sake, "for the future generations". This might be true, but another more hidden narrative (Scott 1990: 4) exists where the "respect for nature" is mimicry to the hegemonic discourse.

5.2.2 Creating the mentality

In order to usher the local population out of the mentality of the first wave of frontier conquest and into the new eco-mindset the city had to be created as the public mentality on the outset of ecotourism was considered "uncooperative if not indifferent" (Ponce De Leon, 2004: 201). An array of programs and rituals were implemented to achieve the desired mentality.

The most famous of these is *Pista y Ang Kagueban* (Feast of the Forest). It is a yearly celebration in the Eco Adventure Park where the mayor together with hundreds of volunteers rides up to the park and plant trees. So far over a million trees have been planted according to some reports (ibid. p.210). The ritual is an attempt to, in one aspect, instill the mentality of caring for nature and repairing

the damage done during the first wave of frontier conquest. It was considered the centerpiece of the mayors environmental rehabilitation program (ibid. p.295). The other aspect of the ritual serves to promote Puerto Princesa by creating a captivating story that news media can spread.

The latter aspect is probably the more successful of the two. One informant conferred, "they've been planting trees up there for 20 years now. They [the trees] clearly don't have a very good survival rate since they keep going back to the same spot over and over again."

Another important program was the *Kaingin Ban*, which is a city mandate prohibiting the slash and burn agriculture of the indigenous population. The program had adverse effects and was substituted with a rice rations program for those affected. However, this program was not "sustainable", and according to the city government the people themselves shifted to off-farm economic activities (ibid. p.231).

5.2.3 Creating the image

The city of Puerto Princesa had obstacles to overcome in the national discourse from the outset. The history of lepers, prisoners and malaria were a strong discouraging mark on the city. Puerto Princesa now applies clearer marketing to gain a new image and a new audience of potential tourists, both domestic and international.

The city has used public marketing through imagery and manipulation of certain key words in the environmental discourse. The images most often presented are of a peaceful city in balance with nature. Posters and ads of emerald green seas and lush beaches are common. The imagery is often accompanied by tidbits of information. One such ad shows the above stated imagery combined with a text saying "A Carbon Neutral City". The play on carbon neutrality is a conscious marketing strategy. When one contextualize the statement however, it looses some of its' power. Puerto Princesa is indeed a carbon neutral city. But the definition of city is probably not what most people picture when they hear the word. The "city" of Puerto Princesa is actually mainly uninhabited forests and mountains (73% according to Klow & Salcedo, 2009:28). Thus the carbon offset is considerable compared to the human activities. Industrial development is also almost no existent in the city, which it often parades in the statistics as having no polluting industry (when it might as well say "no industry"). The city is also the least population dense in the Philippines.

Another move to market the city as progressive sustainability is the E-trike program. In order to combat the rampant pollution by tri-cycles (motorcycle taxis) in the city, the mayor has enacted a program to out-phase the tricycles

with electric ones. So far the program has not be very successful. The costs of the new E-trikes are well beyond most tri-cycle drivers, and the battery-life is apparently not sufficient for a days work (Personal communication with a tri-cycle driver). So far the number of E-trikes are mostly stationed at the airport where incoming tourists have the highest odds of seeing one.

Many things in Puerto Princesa are just for show one informant working as a Peace Corp officer told me. "There is a certain aura about it, I don't know if it's a Filipino thing or just here. But people just say they are going to do things and then that's that, they never actually do it. When I first came here they told me "oh yes we have a youth rehabilitation center." But all they had was a barrack somewhere, no programs, no reintegration efforts, nothing, just a barrack where they could keep the kids. I get that feeling here with ecotourism as well, as long as they can show something that should be a part of an ecotourism project, they will, but it's purely aesthetical."

5.3 Crony environmentalism

Crony environmentalism is a form of free-trade mentality disguised as environmental consciousness. It allows for a moral justification of pursuing financial endeavors that can be linked to sustainable development. By identifying themselves as "environmental fighters" rather than "greedy capitalists" the moral justification for engaging in what, at many times, are exploitive enterprises are legitimized. These ecotourism enterprises are often not "open for all" to engage in. Ties with high ranking government officials are often an implicit prerequisite; as such it is mainly the elites of Puerto Princesa that benefit from the ecotourism endeavor.

5.3.1 Edward S. Hagedorn

Puerto Princesa is rife with rumors of corruption and nepotism when it comes to the man in charge. The man, as he is often referred to, is Edward S. Hagedorn, longtime mayor of "the city in a forest".

It would be impossible to describe the dynamics of Puerto Princesa without accounting for the mayor. This larger than life persona has reached international fame by transforming a once desolate dusty frontier town into the "Ecotourism Capital of the Philippines". He is without exaggeration *the* main actor in the stage-making project transforming Puerto Princesa.

Where ever one may travel along the main highway one encounter large billboards with shoddy Photo Shop artwork of Hagedorn in front of some of the different ecotourist destinations that he promotes. There is an eerie feeling of

"great leader", and indeed this man embodies the role of the charismatic leader suggested by Alberoni (1984:27).

Within the government there is an almost fanatical devotion and enthusiasm about him. In an interview with two officials at the department of tourism, my informants told me their greatest fear for the future would be a change in leadership (read someone else as mayor). They also confirmed the rampant corruption of the city but made very strong efforts to exempt the mayor from any such activities. In fact, when talking with government officials (except for a few) Hagedorn seemed to be *the only* politician who is not corrupt, as one official told me "as you can see from his track record". What track record and who keeps it, however, I was never showed.

The personal history of Hagedorn is quite remarkable. Just as Puerto Princesa seemed like the most unlikely candidate for the position of ecotourism hotspot some 30 years ago. So did the prospect of Hagedorn being mayor.

The legend of Edward S. Hagedorn almost seems like it is taken right out of a bad western movie. Actually, he has two major movie made about him one in which he is played by Filipino star actor Fernando Poe Jr. (The same actor who was runner up in the 2004 Presidential elections of the Philippines). The unlikely candidate had a lot of things working against him when becoming a mayor. First of all he wasn't even from Puerto Princesa, nor was he from any prominent family in the province of Palawan, both of which are informal requirement in Filipino politics (Klow & Salcedo 2009:22).

His first encounters with Puerto Princesa was when he as a young boy got sent to Palawan from Manila, as a punishment, to work for the family business. The family business happened to be logging, and Hagedorn quickly learned that there was a good amount of money to be made in illegal logging on Palawan (ibid. p.24). In the underground dealings of Puerto Princesa he got involved in an illegal numbers game called *jueteng* (an informal lottery game). Soon he had become a *jueteng* lord, running a major gambling operation (ibid. p.24). Around the same time he was charged with the murder of a police officer (ibid. p.24), which he later claimed was an act of self-defense. The unlikeliness of Hagedorn as mayor was further strengthened by the fact that he was dared to candidate for mayor by his friends during a late-night Mahjong game (ibid. p.69). There seems at least officially to be two legends about Edward S. Hagedorn, pre-mayoral past of sin, and the post-mayoral redeemed man.

In 1992, Hagedorn was elected into the office of the mayor. At the time he had not much of a platform to run on. So he decided to dedicate the city budget, which was tiny at the time, towards cleaning up the city and purchase brooms

and trashcans. As he later said, I decided to run on cleaning up the city, everyone like a clean place (ibid. p.77). Sanitation became the main focus point of his early years as a mayor. Since then he has implemented many successful programs, ranging from housing to tourism.

The mayor is the bridging agent between public and private ecotourism development in Puerto Princesa. He is both the mascot and the facilitator for the implementation of ecotourism businesses in the city. The ecotourism process in Puerto Princesa is a joint venture between city government and private enterprises. Where the city government besides their own programs, is pursuing a practice of creating a hospitable climate for eco entrepreneurs to thrive.

The global recognition the mayor has achieved serves as a beacon for foreign investments, both tourists and entrepreneurs, to come to Puerto Princesa. The mayor's image has become a seal of approval for Puerto Princesa as a "legit" ecotourism destination.

5.3.2 Eco-Entrepreneurialism

Puerto Princesa has attracted a special breed of entrepreneurs. Some are native Princesans, other arrive because of the location. They come to because the deregulated nature of what can be an ecotourism enterprise is partially guaranteed by the political wills of the city. The business climate ensured by the city government and perhaps mainly by the mayor, is highly attractive to this breed of entrepreneurs.

An Eco-Entrepreneur is someone who is capitalizing on the booming economy of the ecotourism business. Many engage in tour operations of various "eco-sites", organizing treks or boat rides, set up eco-lodges for tourists. There are also an auxiliary band of entrepreneurs who aim at making profits from standard tourism ventures; restaurants, bars, hotels, shops etc. that has no specific "eco" orientation. Most ecotourist are not hard-core environmentalist, and will enjoy the services of most other establishments as well as going on eco-tours. In many aspects they move back and forth between ecotourist and regular tourist, it is generally difficult to make out the distinction between the two.

Because most tourists are not all or nothing eco-consumers, most ecotourism in Puerto Princesa requires some added spice to attract visitors. One such place is the Eco-Park, one of the main field-sites for this research.

The park is a newly founded joint operation between the government and private capital. The owners are a foreign family from another continent, where they own and operate another successful eco-adventure park. The park is a huge

tract of land acquired on a 50-year lease from the city government in exchange for 10% of the sales.

To capitalize on the natural environment, the natural environment had to be altered one of the owners told me. "Not many people like to just come here and walk around". This was a considerable dismay to him as he conferred, "if every tourist we had here was westerner we would not have to do all this", he said moving his arm in an arch over the landscape. "No, you see, westerners who come here are 'travelers', they want to imbibe the culture and the raw nature. But Filipinos, phah! they just want to be entertained!" The park's and Puerto Princesa's main visitors are domestic tourist from other parts of the Philippines, who come from the metropolitan areas, having imbibed the global environmental discourse. To cater to these particular clientele attractions around nature are constructed.

The park boasted Asia's longest zip-line as the main feature. Besides the zip-line, a butterfly farm, massage treatment, fish and bird feeding, and a canopy walk were the attractions offered.

Closer to the city proper and right next to the paved road, there was another eco-adventure park that recently had to close down. This one however, boasts quad-racers (four wheel motorcycles), giant plastic "zorbs" (an inflatable hamster ball you get in and roll down a hill in), among many other not so "eco" activities. I overheard that a dispute between the two parks had been going on for some time and rumors had it that the owner of the other park had gotten in a dispute with the mayor that had led to financial ruin for the park, which has now closed.

5.4 Spectacular Accumulation

The universal of ecotourism is not only "downward" pushing from its' global epicenters in the Western world as is so often assumed (i.e. imperialism). Rather it is a stream flowing around the globe. When the conditions are right at a locality, it can converge down to engage with the social fabric.

Local desires for international capital can galvanize a locality to engage in spectacular accumulation (Tsing 2008: 59). The spectacular accumulation is a sort of drama that utilizes the global narratives to conjure "down" investments. It is new form of accumulation process with an inherent logic to economies located at the peripheries of the capitalist system. In both Tsing's case and this thesis (they are in geographical proximity) three distinct components make up the "set" for the drama to play out; crony environmentalism, frontier culture, and

global investments (see fig.3). A slight difference is that global investments in Puerto Princesa go under the name of "tourism".
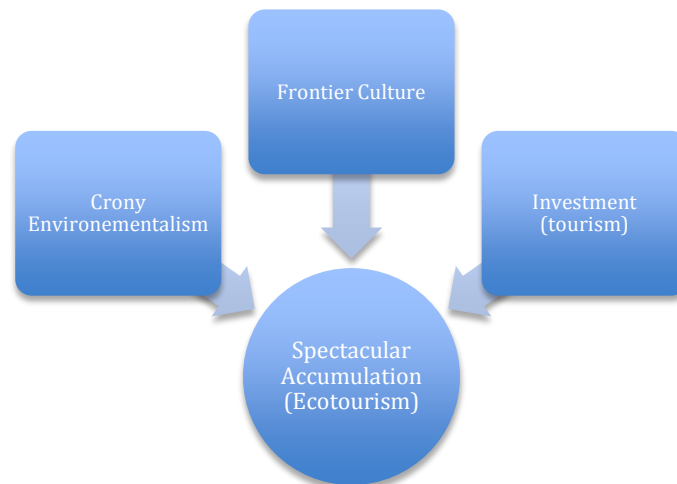
The three components that make up the "dramatization" of spectacular accumulation tries to conjure tourist to come to Puerto Princesa by aligning themselves with the global universals. Crony environmentalism becomes a local specific form of neoliberalism, frontier culture is set out to resemble environmentalism, and tourism becomes equated to development.

Ecotourism exists as two rather independent entities. There is the global universal concept, the constellation of neoliberalism, environmentalism and development, and the local practice in Puerto Princesa consisting of crony environmentalism, frontier culture, and tourists.

The logic of Puerto Princesa's engagement with spectacular accumulation is by aligning the local practice to mimic the global concept the city will attract tourists. The art of attraction is not only through commercial marketing (although it is a big part), but also by media coverage, and global organizations. Both of which only engage with the local fabric if the dramatization is captivating enough to arouse interest.

The synergy created by the components in Puerto Princesa becomes Ecotourism. In other words, spectacular accumulation in Puerto Princesa can be perceived of as ecotourism in action. Ecotourism is not the goal; it is the means to attract international capital (tourists) to this relatively isolated part of the Philippines. The drama is the social context in which ecotourism has become a defining institution for the social reproduction of Puerto Princesa.

The "Stage-making" for ecotourism to play-out is an elite project. Most of the subordinate population does not have the necessary education or financial

means to engage in this project except as forming an "eco-proletariat" of cheap labor.

The drama becomes visible and ethnographically accountable by observing how it relates to the friction it creates. These frictions it will be argued are visible in the study of resistance and transformation. Friction if we recall, is the manifestation of new arrangements of culture and power. With this theoretical map in mind, the aim is to show how global universals engaged with Puerto Princesa and caused a transformation in the social reproduction, specifically through ecotourism.

6. Transformations

In the preceding chapter the stage-making of Puerto Princesa was outlined. The endeavor should, at least theoretically, produce a vibrant and socially adapted ecotourism industry. In Puerto Princesa, however, the stage-making process has had a range of unintended consequences. These consequences take the shape of transformations. They arise because of the local desire to attract tourists is connected to the abstract understandings of ecotourism, understandings that have not accounted for the transformations occurring.

Ecotourism as a friction is a concrete reshaping of society. The travel-centered nature of ecotourism brings together people and cultures from the entire world. The interactions between "hosts" and "guests" ultimately transform locations. Ness points out that "*touristic landscapes are capable of producing injurious, traumatic forms of displacement*" (Ness, 2005: 118).

Tourism scholars often expect transformation, economic and social, normally they are lumped up in negative or positive transformations. Since the objective is to explain how unintended consequences of ecotourism practice has enrolled resistors, this chapter will focus on the popularly perceived negative effects. The exclusion of positive development indicators should not be understood as if they were lacking, more pragmatically, content people tend to not partake in acts of resistance.

By making visible and understanding the unintended consequences of the ecotourism project in Puerto Princesa, the various forms of what might seem as clandestine and irrational acts, are conceptualized as acts of resistance. They become more intelligible and contextualized in the process of friction.

6.1 Relocations

One of the devastating effects of ecotourism in Puerto Princesa has been legal relocation. This was a very hard topic to talk about for many informants within the public sector, as it carried a stigma of failed governing on the part of the sitting government. Most choose not to speak about it, some denied it outright, however, a few dared to voice their concerns and how they felt about the fates of all those who had been relocated. As there will be no official data claiming that relocations were part of the city governments overall ecotourism engagement, the analysis relies on the information conveyed by informants and pragmatic observations of two sites.

It is difficult to connect ecotourism as the culprit of relocations. Ecotourism does not entail that some people should be relocated. Yet the unintended consequences of pursuing ecotourism can be linked to two different instances of relocation that has had dismal social consequences. In the pursuit of tourists, certain segments of the population become obstacles for the overall plan of stage-making. They occupy land that in the eyes of the city government can be put to better use than what the current inhabitants are utilizing it for. If these relocations are the result of greed, malevolence or progressive thinking is beyond this study to conclude, but that they occurred is clear.

To confirm that the relocations were indeed a result of ecotourism there are two fairly apparent indicators. Firstly, there used to be people inhabiting areas for generations until less then a decade ago, now they are not. Secondly, what has taken their place, are, or can be linked to tourism development. However, every location is unique and has a particular history of development.

6.1.1 The Tagbanua

The Tagbanua are one of the officially recognized indigenous people of Palawan. Although many live in the smaller cities in the province, they used to inhabit a large swatch of land stretching from the mountains down to the coast, practicing swidden agriculture. They have long been marginalized by the development in the province. Being the one of the original settlers, they suddenly found themselves as part of the frontier, having to be conquered. First by Spanish missionaries, then by American missionaries.

Two historic developments eventually drove most of the Tagbanua into the mountains[1]. The first was a small-pox epidemic which killed a substantial part of the population in the early 1900's; the second was the establishment of the Iwahig penal colony on their lands which left the Tagbanua to fight off violent criminals.

On walks to the Eco Park one comes across abandoned farmsteads and partially reclaimed fields. On further inquiry into these farms and fields the informants told me that the Tagbanua used to live up in the hills where the park now lays. When asked why they do not live there anymore the answer was often swift and matter of factly; "because this is a nature reservation now" and "no permanent structures are allowed within the reservation because this is where all the drinking water for Puerto Princesa comes from".

The Park is designated natural reservation by the Presidential Proclamation No. 2221 enacted under the Marcos regime. The proclamation entails that no

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[1] Masitampo (President of Indigenous People Council), interview Sep. 11th 2012.

permanent structures are permitted. Yet the Tagbanua were allowed to continue inhabiting the park based on the Ancestral Lands Act, which grants them the right to not be evicted. However, under Republic Act No. 7611, certain areas were deemed as "Environmentally Critical Areas Network" such as the Puerto Princesa Water district, this puts the area as a watershed in need of higher protection status, which also restricts the erecting of permanent buildings.

No one within the city government seemed to implement these acts until a few years ago, briefly before plans for the Eco Park were born. The Eco Park has indeed permanent structures in the park, made out of concrete and corrugated iron. One building in particular seemed strange, the restrooms, which are built perhaps 10 meters from the Irawan River (the source of drinking water) on a slight downward slope towards the river. As there is no plumbing in the Park, the restrooms are built above a large septic tank. Particularly alarming about this fact is that concrete in tropical climates smolder easily, and septic tanks in general are notoriously famous for leaking in the Philippines[2].

I often asked the informants about the restrooms. It wasn't until the last visit to the Park that one informant in a jovial fit of celebration told me that the restrooms were the "one thing they were not allowed to talk about", followed by five or six frowning stares from the rest of the staff and a brief silence. It is clear why they are not allowed to talk about the restrooms. The official justification for the relocation of the Tagbanua is that their habitation poses a health hazard to the water supply of Puerto Princesa and that no permanent structures are allowed within the confines of the natural reserve. Both these reasons are dubious at best. Since there *are* permanent structures in the park and they pose a serious risk to the water safety.

6.1.2 Vilification and "zooification"

The Tagbanua has had to endure pressure both from the government and from the NGOs sector in Palawan (Novellion & Dressler, 2010). Both actors share in the same discourse of development and environmentalism (ibid. p.173), in which managerial perspective is favored for achieving sustainability. The Tagbanua have been forced out as a part of "imposing wilderness". Justifying relocation on the grounds of environmental concerns.

The Tagbanua practice *Kaingin*, or swidden agriculture. This strategy for subsistence has become the central focal point for both the government and NGOs. *Kaingin* is considered as detrimental to the conservation efforts that the two parties are aspiring towards. The Tagbanua had initially been pushed towards more intensive forest harvesting by encroaching migrants and anti-

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[2] Hoevenaars, K., Personal Communication 2012.

kaingin legislation, which further caused environmental degradation (ibid. p.172). By effectively portraying the Tagbanua as backwards and environmentally unconscious, the two republican acts gained widespread popular consent and were effectively used to push the Tagbanua of the land and relocate them in a nearby barangay.

The living conditions in the new barangay are detrimental to most Tagbanua. There is a widespread avoidance among the Filipinos in mingling with the indigenous people. On my visits to Tagbanua villages the local Filipinos would often warn me not to eat any of the foods, as it would most certainly be poisoned. When I asked why on earth they would poison me, the reply was often one of "that's just what they do". I was never poisoned.

An official at the Irawan barangay government told me that he was saddened by the current situation of the Tagbanua. "They have lost all happiness… they are bullied, they succumb to alcoholism. You know they used to have all kinds of fruit trees up there [in the Park] but now they have to eat cereals and make souvenirs for the tourist". Many Filipinos shared sympathetic anger with the Tagbanua, often saying things like "what if they did that to us?!" and "the government are all crooks, picking on the weakest and easiest". As we shall see, the rumors were clear about that the city government did exactly that to the Baybay Filipino community.

What is left of the Tagbanua in the Park is perhaps one of the more tasteless displays of "culture" in Puerto Princesa. The Eco-Adventure Park is strewn with little statues of dark-skinned spear-wielding bare-breasted human figures. The figures were often referred to as "our Africans" by the staff. Being displayed in the scene of nativity from the bible and next to giant pink and green mushrooms and plastic deer's. I often asked what they were supposed to be. During one tour a guide told the visitors that the statues were the Tagbanua, "stone-age" people who used to live in Palawan. This coincides with the "culture and educational" aspects of ecotourism projects, albeit in a distorted manner. The sad reality was that the Tagbanua (often indistinguishable from Filipinos) who used to live in the Park up until five years ago where living a few kilometers away in misery.

6.1.3 The Baybay squatters
The part of Puerto Princesa that is now known as the Puerto Princesa Baywalk is located along the north/western shore of the city proper. It has been developed into a nice recreational area for citizens and tourists. The area used to be known as the baybay settlement.

The baybay settlement was a shantytown of squatters, tightly populated and haphazardly constructed. A fire claimed the shanty and the inhabitants were

relocated to the district of Aborlan some miles away. Aborlan is perhaps the antithesis of what baybay residents were used to. From living smack in the middle of a bustling city to the sleepy agricultural setting that lacks electricity.

The popular rumor to why they had been resettled was that the fire was started by the city officials when the residents had refused to move, thus ruining the city's plans of a tourist generating baywalk. "We were prime location for views of the bay. Of course they wanted us to move. Why else wouldn't they just rebuild new and better housing on the same location?"

The case of the baybay squatters is wisely approached with caution. All there was to go on were rumors and gossip. No official accounts of what transpired are available beyond that a fire claimed the settlement. In the mind of those who used to live there however, their resettlement to neighboring Aborlan has a clear explanation and housed a general resentment towards the elected officials.

6.2 "Leave only footprints, take only photographs"

This popular slogan has for long come to encapsulate a global value within the ecotourism community. Ecotourism, it is perceived, is a subtle form of treading lightly in the place to where one ventures. Footprints can be washed away by the wave and taking photographs remove nothing. This ideal construct neglects the side of ecotourism that is perhaps not so benign, the *tourism* aspect.

Tourists of all sorts bring luggage. Not just the kind you carry around filled with clothes and hygiene articles, but a cultural kind as well. Just as there are porters trying to earn money on carrying the physical luggage, so too there are entrepreneurs trying to cater to the cultural one. Most tourists desire certain comforts reminiscent of home, roads, shower, electricity, Wi-Fi-internet, restaurants, shops, alcohol, entertainment etc.

When these services are provided, they do not leave when the tourist do. They remain in the location and interact with the inhabitants on a daily basis. Often unnoticed to the tourists, a piece of their culture has profound effect on the local culture after they leave.

The examples below portray arguably the worst of tourism luggage. But they do serve as a reminder that ecotourism can attract not so "eco" tourists. And mainly they become a foundation for the popular ambiguity with the ecotourism project.

6.2.1 The Robinson Shopping center

On the outskirts of Puerto Princesa lays a large newly built shopping center. Modern and air-conditioned, it is a popular site both for the tourists as for the local inhabitants. When one walks around the center there is one noticeable difference from a shopping center in the West. Very, very few shoppers are actually shopping. On the several occasions I was there doing field observations, it was almost exclusively tourists who had any shopping bags in their hands. Most of the local population seemed to just wander around and browse the stores, hang out in the arcade or perhaps eat something in the food court. Almost every visit I would run into one or several of the informants from other sites.

The shopping center has recently drawn public attention since it was causing daily blackouts on the power-grid, leaving many homes without electricity for hours at the time. Things had gotten so bad that the city mayor had threatened the power company that city government would take over the power station "if PALECO [the power company] didn't get their act together" (Redempto, 2012).

The power-outs were also a threat to the tourism development of the city, as hotels and other tourism infrastructure requires electricity to manage bookings and provide services.

The political move of the mayor to warn PALECO was seen as curious to many, since it was his government that had approved of the Robinson shopping center's construction in the first place.

6.2.2 The sensation of poverty

The shopping center has had another serious implication on the local community. 28.4 % of the households in Puerto Princesa live under the national poverty line (NSCB, 2013). This entails an annual income lower than PhP 8,100 (roughly $185, 2012 value) in Palawan (ibid.). To this large portion of the local population a pair of PhP 800 jeans in the Robinson shopping center is far from affordable. Most of the stores in the shopping center have prices that are beyond the financial prowess of many locals.

The fact of poverty being felt much more immanently with the construction of the shopping center has led to a general feeling of discomfort for many. A decade ago the wealth stratification was not as protracted in Puerto Princesa. With the influx of tourists the physical structures are left as reminders in the eyes of many of what they cannot afford.

6.2.3 The "rural girls problem"

Prostitution has increased substantially over the past years in Puerto Princesa[3]. The lure of fast money from drunken tourists has sent many young girls from the country side into town. The informants asked about the issue conferred that it was common but "bery bery hush hush" topic to talk about. They (the informants) believed that most girls came from the countryside or other provinces in the Philippines. "You know, life in the farms is really boring. The young girls they have nothing to do but dream so they go to the town to work [non prostitution related]. But no work, they go with men instead." The prevalence of prostitutes had started to worry some informants. "Before there were not so many prostitutes in Puerto. When the men go to the girls they might fall in love. Many men with one girl, and then they fight when drinking, and boom boom someone is dead." The disease aspect was another worrying topic, especially for the female informants. "What if a man has sexual intercourse with a girl and get HIV, then go home to his wife and gives it to her?"

Understandably the growth in prostitution has caused a general anxiety about tourism.

6.2.4 Migrations

Puerto Princesa is a city of migrants. "You know, only 1/3 of people here are born in Puerto" one informant said. The statistic is probably exaggerated but hold some validity. Puerto Princesa has grown demographically the last 20 years, beyond that what natural fertility rates would suggest. The influx of migrants is locally understood as a symptom of the booming tourism economy. Puerto Princesa is nationally famous for being the cleanest city in the Philippines and its success with developing tourism has attracted rural poor from all of the Philippines. Between 2000 and 2010 the population grew with almost 30% (Census, 2010).

Some informants felt that the migration had been to fast. The local economy could not absorb all the people and instead they were all struggling over the few jobs available and mostly starting small enterprises like tri-cycle taxis (4,000 of them), small shops, and tour operators. The tricycle issue had especially gotten out of hand they claimed. A quick look around Puerto Princesa and it becomes apparent that the informants had a valid point. The streets a crammed with tri-cycles making the air thick of diesel exhausts.

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[3] Klebes, M., Interview, 2012.

6.3 Landscapes "under construction"

This section aims at developing the understanding that the ecotourism project of Puerto Princesa causes widespread physical transformation of the landscape. It comes of as preposterous at first; ecotourism should after all be about conservation. Yet again the other side of the concept, the "tourism", part is often neglected.

6.3.1 Korean Roads

Running along the north-south of the main island of Palawan is a somewhat fully paved road. It is better at some parts, like Puerto Princesa, and unpaved in others. On any given day there will be hundreds of tour-vans on this road. They zoom by in furious speed and sweep along the mountainous crags.

Along the road between Puerto Princesa and Sabang where the subterranean river is, there are several day quarries where entire parts of a mountain have been obliterated. I had read that Palawan had a history of nickel mining and assumed that those where just open mines. Later during a ride with an informant who is a local environmental surveyor, I was told that the mines where not mines, they were quarries. "Oh yes, what used to be there is what we are driving on here" he said pointing at the road. The foundation of the entire stretch of the road had been stripped from the surrounding mountains and left gaping scars in the landscape.

The construction of the road had not been without some resentment among the local inhabitants. A Korean contractor was hired to build the road, jobs sorely desired by many in the local community. Informants told me that the city government didn't trust Filipino workers. "You know, you hire a Pilipino to do work on the road. You give him 10 bags of concrete; he'll use 8 bags for the road and take home 2 bags for his house. That's why Pilipino roads are so bad.". This sentiment was largely shared by many, to such an extent that it was believed that the city government shunned Filipino laborers on the road. The laxity of Filipino workers is probably an exaggeration; the ones I worked alongside were far from slow. But this story shows another element. The poverty of many people in Puerto Princesa is to such a degree that it actually leads them to petty larceny. The jobs being created by ecotourism's development might not benefit all in the city, as some of the more unskilled jobs are not entrusted to the poor.

The road has been crucial for the development of the ecotourism project. The drive from Puerto Princesa to Sabang takes at least 2 hours, and a paved road is necessary to ensure the comfort of the tourists as well as the longevity of the tour vans.

Tour vans are privately owned but operated under a tour service provider. For example a tourist goes into a tour operator, asks to go to Sabang, the operator gets a driver and organize the multiple permits and guides needed. Since the drivers are at risk for the vans, they rather not go on unpaved roads. This was a great concern to the owners of the Eco Park, since the park was located a couple kilometers of the main road on a bumpy gravel road. One of the owners expressed his discontent; "they [the van driver] only suggest the shitty tours of the city and to destinations along the main road to them [the tourists]. We have considered paving the road up here but it feels strange to be an Eco Park with a paved parking lot".

Tourists are shuttled around a very limited circuit of paved road in Puerto Princesa, the main attraction is paved from hotel to the boat dock, and tour van drivers don't want to take dirt roads. The road has stripped mountains, employed foreign labor, and become a virtual death trap for children being at risk of speeding tour vans.

6.3.2 Snake Island closed for maintenance.

Snake Island used to be one of the popular islands along the Honda Bay island-hopping tour, which is hailed as one of the cities main ecotourism attractions. On one occasion I asked the captain of the banca if we could go to Snake Island. He looked disappointedly at me and shrugged while saying "Snake Island, under construction". It seemed strange that an ecotourism island could be "under construction", as there are no lodges or overnight possibilities on the islands of the tour and that the boats drive straight up on the beach to disembark the passengers. A few days later an informant working for the Peace Corps in Puerto Princesa responded to the news with "Bhahh! Under construction? Dude, that place is closed for cleaning up all the shit that is littering the place. All those tourist who go out there and not a single trashcan, what'd you expect? It's a travesty". Snake Island it seemed had become a casualty in the onslaught of ecotourist. The impact on marine life of Snake Island was still unknown but at a neighboring island of Pandan it had become apparent.

In an attempt to combat the reef destruction caused by tourists, the water adjacent to the beach had been marked of with a roped barrier, and tourist where only allowed to swim within the confines of the barrier. Every now an then they moved the barrier to let the old part of the reef regenerate. A marine biologist in Puerto Princesa told me that this seemed ludicrous, even though it had been one of her student's ideas[4]. The intentions had been for more permanent zones of no swimming. Instead they seemed to just move the barrier on a whim. Another disturbing part of the tourism impact was the incessant fish

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[4] Hoevenaars, K., Interview, 2012.

feeding the tour-guides were engaging in. Coral marine life does not eat bread. However, in an effort to make sure tourist are pleased (and thus tip) the tour-guides kept throwing out bread to attract schools of tropical fish. This has cause premature death among many species. The signs on the beach clearly stating "Do Not Feed Fish", feel on blind eyes. Pandan island exemplifies the contradiction within ecotourism between the conservation and the financial aspect. To obtain both aspects is difficult and requires considerations. Since ecotourism in Puerto Princesa is a form of spectacular accumulation, the desire to attract tourist have gotten a premier position viz-a-viz conservation.

7. Resistance

The transformations outlined above forms part of the overall discontent with what is transpiring in Puerto Princesa. The acts of resistance are not coordinated acts against a defined process, such as ecotourism. Instead, ecotourism has been the prime instigator of the transformations. What the "friction" of ecotourism has created is a rearrangement of culture and power in Puerto Princesa. Accordingly when such process occurs, those in the proverbial middle of it are forced to incorporate those changes into their ontology. The resistance is acted against those elites that are profiting on the new paradigm. They have in the popular view become connected with ecotourism.

With the theoretical foundations of Heidegger (1996) and Ness (2005) the transformation of *place* can be contextualized with the acts of resistance occurring. It is by accounting for such phenomenological stances that these acts become observable as not just decontextualized and sporadic, but as response to the changing socio-cultural reality that is occurring.

Even though the following accounts of resistance is in itself sporadic and perhaps even anecdotal, the resistance should not be considered as such. Rather that the time frame for the study and the vastness of the potential field has left gaps to be filled by future research.

7.1 Spirits in the trees

The zip-line in the Eco Park is considered the longest in Asia. One stretch of it is 800 meters of steel wire suspended in the canopy of the park. To build a zip-line on that scale is not an easy thing to accomplish. Engineering, mathematical calculations of decline and speed, and geological surveying have to be performed. And quite a substantial bit of manual labor is required as well.

In Filipino folklore, the forest is a place inhabited by scores of mythical beings, most of them malevolent towards humans. The stories I collected about these creatures ranged from dwarfs living among the roots of big trees to the Eco Park being the site of where the banished angels were thrown during the biblical battle between Lucifer and God. The forest is a place of immense cultural "thickness" to the people I spoke with, it is tightly connected to their sense of *place*.

Besides the mythical the forest is home to a wide range of useful products. "The forest is our pharmacy" one informant told me while guiding me around the

park. An extensive list of medicinal plants and trees suggests that most maladies can be cured by what is available in the forest.

There is a transformation going on in the way people perceive of the forest. As the forest is moving more and more towards the eco-utilization for tourists, the once sacrosanct *place* is being replaced with a financial *space*. This transformation has not gone unnoticed. There is a sense of losing *place* and the disagreement with this has taken the form of revitalization of ritual.

On one of my first days at the Eco Park I was invited to try the zip-line. I happily strapped into a harness and "zipped" out into the canopy. My thrill and excitement was shortly lived. Halfway through the ride I felt something scratching my hand, which was placed on the contraption above my head used to zip me along. To my shock a green tree lizard had be caught head first in the metal wheels running on the wire and was slowly being decapitated while spraying blood on my face and twitching on my hand and arm. A few seconds later its' head came of and landed on my chest, where by serendipity, it got stuck and stared at me for the reminder of the ride. Startled I told the informants what had transpired in the canopy. They looked seriously at me and claimed, "This is not good, the spirits are angry". I asked what spirits and what I had done to upset them. Everyone had their own answer, ranging from five different spirits to five different reasons. Perhaps it was because I hadn't offered any bananas to them, or maybe it was because the zip line shouldn't be there in the first place.

The construction of the zip-line had not been a simple matter the owners of the Eco Park told me. Everything had transpired smoothly up until the last 30 meters. No matter how they calculated and readjusted the wire it would not bring a passenger all the way to the platform. Work was slow and draining money since they had to keep the entire crew until it was finished. After three weeks of construction stop the workers suggested that the owners should get a priest or shaman (the nomenclature was uncertain) to talk with the spirits in the trees. Seeing no other option the owners got a priest to come and consult the matter. It was decided that an altar had to be built and offerings had to be made. After the ceremony construction resumed and within a few days the zip-line was completed. I asked if the owner believed that the spirits had been the cause of the delays. "No, not really, I think they [the workers] just wanted more pay".

If it was spirits or not is hard to tell. Many informants slyly raised their eyebrows and smiled when we talked about the event. From a resistance perspective however, the behavior is familiar (Scott, 1985). The foot dragging is motivated by what the subordinate group of people perceive of as encroaching on their livelihoods. On a symbolic level, the reversion to ritual signifies a desire among subordinates to protests the modern moneymaking project in the domain

of the forest without risking the possibility of being fired. Outward disapproval would certainly lead to loosing ones job, so instead ritual is used as a strategy for voicing irritation and at the same time hints to the elites that not everything is within their control. By invoking ritual resistance can be masked as traditional belief and thus seen as accepted concerns and actions to be taken.

In some ways this event draws a dichotomy between the elites and the subordinates. The elites are connected to modernization and scientific solutions to problems, both of which are absent to the subordinates. The subordinates in return are connected to the *place* and traditions, which in the subordinate eyes, the elites have forsaken in the quest for riches. Through this one event the elites dependency on the subordinates for achieving their goals, and the subordinates power to hamper "progress" is manifested.

7.2 "Bad leaders, make bad followers"

Informants often conveyed this quote to me. It is an indicator that the informants were aware of their acts as being "not kosher" and perhaps in violation of the social contract. Often when talk about subtle acts of defiance or resistance was brought up, it was justified with this quote. Many informants believe that the elites were staging the game in their favor. They expressed sensations of powerlessness against the wealth and influence the elites had. At the same time how the elites used these advantages unjustly to promote their own interests.

7.2.1 Feigned Compliance

Feigned compliance is according to Scott (1985) another act of resistance. It often takes the form of overtly agreeable attitude or behavior with the authoritative elements of society. It is a charade enacted by subordinates to mask their discontenting emotions and beliefs. When for example, the owners of the park were around informants acted very busily and worked in unison. As soon as the owners left the site, everyone tended to wander off, take a nap, sit and chat, smoke cigarettes, or gossip about the owners. Often parodying and nicknaming the owners, highlighting their laziness and poor treatment of the workers, among other things, would follow the gossip.

This type of resistance is not directed against ecotourism as such; rather it is against those who are profiting from it. The foreign family who had set up shop in Puerto Princesa as Eco entrepreneurs often acted arrogantly and patronizing according to the informants. They were making money on the forest that had been part of local life for as long as anyone could remember, and it was perceived, were not sharing those profits evenly. It was true many reasoned that they had given people from the local Barangay jobs, but many spoke of going to

Manila or even Qatar to work as servants and cashiers since it paid much better then "sitting in a forest".

Feigned compliance was also acted out towards tourists. This is often the case in market-based transaction, as most people a generally very courteous towards customers. Yet subtle differences were noticeable, especially when it was Filipino tourists from the metropolitan areas of the country. The tourist often acted patronizing towards the employees. Ordering them around and being short-spoken with them. Behind their backs, most employees were ridiculing the tourists. "Look at the fat boy, he looks like a giant bumblebee" one employee whispered to me as a corpulent little boy in black and yellow was swooshing by in the canopy while his parents where looking on.

Such remarks are probably not intended for harm, since they are being whispered or acted out behind backs of people they (the informants) most likely will never see again. Instead they act as leveraging of the moral standing of the informant. The client may behave patronizing and demeaning towards the employee who is obliged to behave courteously back, putting the employee in a subordinate position. To counter this, at least internally, the client is being ridiculed in various ways behind the scenes.

7.2.2 Foot dragging

Foot dragging is the act of intentionally working slow or ineffective. Many times this it to intentionally make tasks harder then they have to be. One such instance was the sweeping the floor of a visitor center. The traditional way of sweeping floors is a bent over posture grabbing a bunch of branches tied together. On one occasion I suggested the improvement of putting a shaft on the branches so that bending over wouldn't be necessary. But this idea was briskly brushed off as stupid. Instead work resumed bent over and with many pauses to stretch out the back and idle.

In a resistance context this detail has two parts, which are contextual to the social situation. Firstly, the informants got paid by the hour, thus ensuring that work took as long as possible was in fact ensuring that there would be more work. Added with the generally accepted understanding that work such as sweeping the floors required many pauses. The second part is that the brushes were made by the Batak, an indigenous people of Palawan, thus by asking for brushes made from the Batak rather than from a supermarket the informants reinforced their traditional customs as well as help out what they perceived as a group of people having been marginalized in the new ecotourism society.

7.3 Rumors of corruption

Using rumors and gossip as sources of information is always a very risky approach. The verifiability of rumors and gossip is often hard to establish, as there can be other personal agendas at play beneath the utterance. However, one thing that quickly becomes clear when spending time with local inhabitants of Puerto Princesa is that most of the rumors are about the city government and especially Edward S. Hagedorn.

The clandestine workings of corrupted politicians often lay outside the reach of what can be conventionally researched with standard methods. A fellow academic working in the anti-corruption and transparency office of a major Western development aid organization conferred to me that the atmosphere in the office is often one of despair. "Mostly these guys (corrupt politicians) are ten steps ahead of us, when we think we can nail them for something they have already moved ahead and cleared any lingering connection to what we are looking into". This leaves rumors as the principal indicator of corruption. Some were confirmed after some investigation, others might be fiction.

However, fictions or not, most people encountered in Puerto Princesa still *acted* on the rumors as if they were real. As such powerful social phenomenon, they hold a value as data and explanation for various behavioral responses.

7.3.1 Land

The purchase and sale of land in Puerto Princesa was something often gossiped about among my informants. A close connection to the powers that be was often seen as a pre-requisite for any purchase or sale of land.

One rumor was told to me from a former landowner in the city. When the informants had decided to sell their respectably sized parcel of land, a city official approached them. The land was located near to the city proper and the land value had increased a fair bit due to the booming real estate price from the tourist sector. The informants had settled on a price and posted a sales add. The city official in turn offered them twice the price they had initially wanted. The offer came with a catch. Officially they would sell the land for the new amount; unofficially they would sell it for the original amount. The buyer was the city government, which would allocate taxpayer funds for the purchase and expected to be given back half of the amount, consequently laundering the money. Officially the purchase would seem like tax payer money well spent; unofficially only half of the tax payers money were well spent, where the other half went was a topic of great debate among informants.

Thinking that this was a unique and casual event, I asked another informant who had no affiliation with the former about what he thought about the story.

Surprised he looked at me and asked how I knew about it; he thought only he and a few others knew about this land sale. After a few moments of naming names and pointing at connections, we determined that we in fact were not talking about the same land sale at all. We had discovered two separate instances of the same scheme.

There is of course no way of completely confirming that these events transpired. The informants who told me about their land sale could not produce any tangible evidence (it was an oral agreement), and the other informants were referring to people I never met. This is a problem of researching in an atmosphere of corruption, it is clandestine and leaves very little traces of the activities engaged in. What are left are little rumors that circulate.

These rumors act as important signifiers for people. They help maintain a checks and balance of the power relations in Puerto Princesa. What the elite may usurp from the political and financial advantage they loose in their social standing among the subaltern. The rumors are charged with symbolic meaning that transcends the message being conveyed. The shady dealings of the city government carries the symbolic meaning of the unmoral behavior of greed and how by these unmoral ways that the elites generate more wealth.

Scott argues that rumors thrive under social conditions in which events of importance to the interests of people are transpiring and in which there is no reliable information available (1990: 144). The rumors circulating in Puerto Princesa thus indicates that there has been a shift in the social hierarchies. The structures of power have grown vertically in a once small and flat society. The elites in power have managed to distance themselves from the subordinates to a degree where rumoring becomes the only viable form of explanation of what is happening. The rumors become social indicators of the wealth stratification of Puerto Princesa, where the ones with power are removed from the daily lives of those without. To bridge the gap of information the rumors serve as important contextualizing entities.

7.4 Powerlessness

The reason that acts of resistance are subtle in Puerto Princesa is a pragmatic one. The social context in which these acts are played out is one of very uneven power. Those with power have aligned themselves with a very powerful global discourse through which they can justify their actions. To go openly go against the elites of Puerto Princesa is to be labeled as someone who does not care about the environment.

The culture of political corruption and severe financial disadvantage has also forced the acts of resistance to become clandestine. There is both personal and financial danger in publicly voice agitation against the powers that be in Puerto Princesa.

Of the many cases encountered, one in particular stood out. It was not acts of subtle resistance, but of genuine concern over the wellbeing of the environment. It did not follow the ecotourism guidelines. Instead it stood out as defiant against the current paradigm of ecotourism, as an alternative approach.

7.4.1 Environmentalism as resistance

In the neighboring district of Aborlan a remarkable man has a dream. He is the founder of the Aborlan Motorbike Brotherhood, Conservation and Gun Club. Decades ago he started to buy some land with the sole intention of preserving it. "I bought this land because I could personally feel that the climate was changing. All the trees in Aborlan were being cut down to make room for rice farms for all the new migrants. The winds changed, it got so hot during the days. The seasons seemed of balance somehow. So I concluded that we need to save some trees." What this man has done has not been easy. He is approached continuously by officials who want to buy his plot of land. He receives no funding for his project. "No, the government is telling me I have to live up to this and this standard. 'Maybe you should start having tours, or do some other tourist friendly activity?' they keep telling me. I tell them that tourists are welcome here to look at the birds if they like." Sadly not many tourist do come to his place, he is not listed in any brochures over ecotourist activities. Only some ornithologists come by now and then since all of the surrounding wildlife has found refuge in his forested oasis.

"Nature is not there to make money off. It is there to be appreciated just as it is. Take a look around in the "Eco Parks" here; all the trees are completely straight. Trees don't grow straight unless the other ones have been cut down." His plot of land has become his act of resistance against those who are making profits on the ecotourism boom. "They're all talking and talking about conservation and saving that and this area, bla bla bla. You think anyone of them [the elites] would do this if there were no money in it? No, they are corrupt and care only about earning money. Why do you think they wont fund my project? Because they wouldn't make a peso on it. My belief is that it should be conservation for conservation sake, not because you can make money on it. So that is why I'm going my own way. I don't need their permission or their money. The only thing I would use that money for is to buy up more land and let it recover. Not turn it into a 'productive investment'."

8. Conclusions

Ecotourism when viewed as a friction opens up the field for a wider analysis and ethnographic sensitivity. What is happening in Puerto Princesa can be attributed to the understanding of ecotourism as a friction that is altering the social fabric and the landscape as it move. This thesis has shown how the structures of ecotourism have evolved and why it is becoming an attractive mode of tourism consumption. This desire to seek out and enjoy ecotourism, have created a global stage for producers of ecotourism destinations to attract tourist by creating a dramatization of the location that is enticing enough to catch the attention of the tourist.

This study was approached primarily through participant observation. Much of the data gauged in this thesis will only be visible by a social contextual observation. The subtle acts of resistance will probably go unnoticed unless a theoretical understanding of them exists, and perhaps more importantly, what creates them. Yet it is only under longer exposure with the researcher that informants relax, act naturally, and divulge in gossip. When working with rumors and gossip there are certain risks of being misled. The tempting trap of journalism presents itself with the juicy details being told. However, this study has tried to look beyond the validity of the rumors and gossip, and instead view them as important directors in the way individuals approach, act and respond to certain information.

The popular way of studying ecotourism had been to compare reality versus rhetoric. This can create a blind spot in the researcher perspective and might be laden with confirmation bias. The parameters of successful/authentic/effective ecotourism are all molded in an abstract understanding of ecotourism. This abstract conceptualization seems to disregard ecotourism as a process, instead there are theoretical assumptions made about the expected outcome of when a location engages with ecotourism. The problem presents itself from the limited local knowledge and broad generalizations, which an abstract understanding of ecotourism proposes. When the focus is on the theoretical assumptions of what ecotourism "should do", what might be happening in the peripheries, is often missed. Instead, when ecotourism is observed as friction, a whole new perspective on local conditions emerges. Unconnected acts and social behavior can be connected to a bigger structural transformation. As well as account for unintended consequences of ecotourism. Events that would not be assumed to have any correlation with ecotourism start to emerge as response to the friction.

Ecotourism as a friction is a global process. It is a slow grinding alteration of localities rather than instant culture clashes. There are different hierarchical

levels in which ecotourism presents it self. At the global level, ecotourism is an amalgamation of western oriented desires radiating downwards from their epicenters such as the UNWTO, WTO, and TIES etc. These desires eventually reach the local level where a structural transformation occurs to mimic the structures of the global level. In this process of mimicking, the social and natural landscape changes. The connection with the old landscape is severed.

Spectacular accumulation is a mode of accumulation most suited for peripheral locations in the global economy. The goal is to create a stage out of the location where a drama can play out that is captivating enough to attract tourists. In Puerto Princesa the stage making has drawn upon three local variants of global universals.

Neoliberalism is translated into crony environmentalism. The business of ecotourism development is a particular constellation of corrupt politicians and eco entrepreneurs coming together under ecotourist aspirations.

Environmentalism is translated into frontier culture. The solidification of a national imagery of Puerto Princesa as a frontier has had an impact on the development of the culture. Where a mentality of having to conquer the frontier and turn it into a commodity has mixed with ecotourism.

Development has been translated into tourism. The city has to such a degree imbibed into tourism as the only pathway for development. No other project has been vested in as much as ecotourism in Puerto Princesa. The development of ecotourism has created an influx of nearly 700,000 tourists a year to the small city, all leaving behind cultural baggage and impacting on the local environment. This has created a social environment rife with disillusionment over ecotourism among the general population.

By engaging ecotourism as a friction, spectacular accumulation becomes visible. Once the "stage-making" can be observed, so too can the unintended consequences of that process. In theory ecotourism should produce a vibrant and adapted tourism practice. Yet the friction created by ecotourism transforms *places*. The transformation of place is often a problematic occurrence. *Place* is something which intimately connected to the being of individuals. There is a sensation of internal displacement concurring with the external transformation of a place. When ecotourism transforms the landscape of Puerto Princesa, this causes a sensation of loss among the population. They are forced to redefine themselves in relation to the new place. This is never an easy task to accomplish without hesitation and resistance.

In Puerto Princesa, the transformations have caused relocations of indigenous and local people from their homes in the quest for ecotourism. It has brought migrants and congestion, pollution and poverty, and the symbolic transformation of the forest from a sacred place into a financial space. Puerto Princesa went from being a relatively flat society into becoming a hierarchical one in less then 20 years. In the new place created by the friction, new arrangements of culture and power have emerged.

The responses to these new arrangements of culture and power have been subtle forms of resistance. Subtle resistance is anonymous, if often takes the character of gossip and rumors, foot dragging and feigned compliance, but also as ritual and environmentalism. Resistance in Puerto Princesa become subtle because of the faceless nature of the process transforming the city, thus mounting popular resistance in the form of demonstrations and protest is impossible. Another aspect of the manner of resistance is the dangerous political climate of the city, where voicing ones opinion can cost someone anything from their job to their life.

The only way of resisting then becomes in subtle acts, uncoordinated and slyly anonymous. The power of these acts lay exactly in their sporadic nature. They become increasingly hard to pick out of everyday life unless one has a certain perspective. The thesis has shown how when one understands the structural transformations brought on by ecotourism, the sporadic acts of resistance become contextual and explainable as a wider social response to the transformation of *place*.

By engaging ecotourism as a friction a more critical approach and perspective can be taken. Concepts such as environmentalism and sustainable development wield a lot of power for those who understand how to utilize them politically. The hope is that this thesis have broadened the perspective of ecotourism as a powerful process, and by critically examining future ecotourism development in the world a more just and socially adaptive form of ecotourism will emerge.

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