CONSTRUCTING ECOTOURISM: THE APPLICATION OF THE TOURISM SYSTEM MODEL IN THE PHILIPPINE CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the concept of ecotourism as a desirable alternative to mass tourism. Using the social constructionist perspective as a theoretical frame, the paper maintains that it is possible to use the tourism system model in the construction of ecotourism as a strategy to promote sustainable resource management and tourism but this approach will only have positive effect if individuals involved in the business of tourism such as brokers, locals, and tourists behave to a tolerable level that will cause the least damage to the local ecosystem. Such behavior, according to the tourism system model, could be modified or regulated by the individuals themselves. To exemplify the applicability of the tourism system model as a tool in planning, developing, and managing ecotourism, Apo Island in the Philippines is presented as a case study.

Introduction

Social constructionists argue that what is basically accepted as reality is in fact constructed by human actions and the interpretations of those actions which somehow vary but could be negotiated among actors (Howard and Hollander 2000: 35). For social constructionists, social reality does not just happen by chance but are constituted by relationships and situations which are in fact cultural but appear as natural to our mind because society makes us believe them to be such. According to this view, we see events in terms of how we have been conditioned to see them unfold before our very eyes. In other words, our reactions to the unfolding of events are defined or circumscribed by concepts that are in fact socially constructed. We learn to differentiate relationships and situations and classify them as positive or negative based on these constructs which eventually also influence how we treat them. This view recognizes that our mode of thinking and eventually our behavior in relation to other people, objects, or events are influenced by the existing dominant discourse.

Using this perspective as a theoretical framework, this paper examines the varying discourses constituting the concept of tourism and the equally varying images associated with it. Borrowing the tourism system model to analyze the intertwined relationships of actors involved in the tourism business, this paper looks at the interplay of power that is constantly negotiated and re-negotiated among actors involved in this business and its impact on the success or failure of tourism. This paper maintains that power is not fixed on anyone in the tourism business but is relative to a particular situation, event, and time that it is exercised. It is not a static quality of a person but a dynamic, shifting property of a relationship that circulates among those interacting actors (Howard and Hollander 2000: 49). Finally, this paper will focus on ecotourism as an alternative type of tourism and will examine the case of Apo Island in central Philippines as an example of this model.

Images of Tourism and Tourists

Historically, *tourism* as a movement of people to other places purely for pleasure became popular only in this century. The early movement of a group of people to other places in search for new lands to colonize was described as *exploration*. When almost all places on the planet had been "claimed" by European explorers, *travel* became a major activity of wealthy families (Fussell 1980: 38-39 in Miller and Auyong 1998: 10). Although the three terms demonstrate mobility in space and time, they differ in motives and experiences and the kind of people involved. While exploration shows a movement of a group of people who risk their lives to adventure in places that are not yet in the map, travel retains the excitement of exploration but of a lesser degree be-

cause it is fused with pleasure of knowing where one is. Tourism, on the other hand, shows the movement of people toward an established destination and is much associated with pleasure. It was first a monopoly of those who can afford the costs it entailed until the invention of mass transportation made travel less costly and paved the way to an increased desire of many to go to other places (Miller and Auyong 1998: 10).

The associated prestige of touristic travel in the twentieth century has inspired people to visit places for pleasure and recreation. Tourists eventually are stereotyped as people who spend money in exchange for the excitement they experience in a destination. And as a good number of people start to seek pleasure in travel and are willing to pay its price, the industry has grown into an attractive business making tourism available to everyone who has money (Grenier, Kaae, Miller and Mobley 1993: 3). Eventually, touristic venture becomes much associated with class position and power beyond its inherent value (i.e. those who travel can afford and, therefore, of a higher social class). As a consequence, tourists are hierarchically classified according to the quality of their mode of travel, accommodation, destination, activities, and so on.

For many tourists, tropical countries, often economically and politically categorized as developing countries, are attractive destinations. Designed to attract tourists particularly from western temperate countries, the images of these countries pictured in many tourism brochures and other advertisement materials show them as having the last havens of unspoiled nature — warm climate, diverse forestal and marine life, high mountains, spectacular waterfalls, secluded beaches fringed by coral reefs, and other exotic attractions (McGoodwin 1986: 144, Cater 1993: 85). They are projected as having untainted hospitality and a culture uncontaminated by modernity and therefore more close to nature. Such images attract certain types of tourists who want simply to become close to nature and traditional life in order to appreciate their beauty and simplicity. It is these types of tourists which have

contributed to the flourishing tourism industry of most developing countries.

However, reality shows that tourists travel for all sorts of reasons other than the pursuit of wholesome pleasure originally associated with tourism. As Fussell contends, the other motivations of tourists for traveling include the realization of fantasies of erotic freedom as well as of imagined position of superiority as a social class (1980: 42 in Miller and Auyong 1998: 10). These fantasies are reinforced by their possession of economic power manifested in their spending capacity. Unaware of the negative consequences, many developing countries have found economic value in catering to these motives. Studies show that beyond the short term benefits that come from this type of tourism, moral, social, and ecological problems that result from this have undermined the industry and brought long term damage to a tourist destination (McGoodwin 1986, Cater 1993, Odzer 1994).

The development of mass tourism in recent years has further eroded the image of the industry and wreaked havoc on the ecological balance of most tourist destinations. It has been observed that the convergence of a great number of people in one place at the same time causes problems to the local people. Along with these are also social relation problems that emerge in the process of handling mass tourists. Considered to be subjectively and negatively characterized by materialism, ignorance, and insensitivity, mass tourism is problematic because it requires the production of more technological and infrastructural supports and services most developing countries do not have the funds to provide (Miller and Auyong, 1998:11-12). The large number of people who travel cause transportation and accommodation problems which demand capital usually drawn from public funds intended to serve the needs of the local population. As a result, the local population become resentful of tourists whom they believe take away what is rightfully theirs. More specifically, as a population problem, mass tourism creates congestion that damaged the carrying capacity of a given ecosystem. Furthermore, the con-

struction of tourist facilities in massive scale means disfigurement of the natural landscape and pollution.

Negàtive Developments and Impacts of Tourism

As the preceding description of the images of tourism suggests, tourism is dynamic and creates changes in a tourist destination (Butler 1992: 33). The influx of more tourists often results in the proliferation of tourism-related businesses beyond the carrying capacity of a particular area. Butler laments that this happens because of the ignorance of people involved in the tourism business about its dimension, nature, and power (1992: 33). Overwhelmed by the desire to make profit out of the increasing degree of touristic demands, local businesses overlook the level of justifiable development that is necessary and fail to manage and control its operation in terms of activities and number of tourist landing. This shortsightedness of local businesses is a reflection of their ignorance of the irreversible damage that tourism can cause on local culture and on the environment.

Being permanent residents of tourist destinations, the locals suffer most when tourism reaches its peak and becomes uncontrollable. In response, they manifest dissenting attitudes toward the tourists in particular and the industry in general. Doxey demonstrates the succession of community attitude towards tourism in five levels with corresponding description of the degree of feelings people have from being pro- to anti-tourist (1975 cited in Kay and Alder 1999: 177). In the first level, described as euphoria, there is enthusiasm for tourist development reflected in mutual feelings of satisfaction for those involved, with the projected opportunities for local participation and the sure flow of capital and interesting contacts. But when the industry expands, the interest turns more towards profit making while tourists' needs are taken for granted. Personal contact also becomes more impersonal and the hospitality of the locals diminish. When the industry nears its saturation point, attitude turns to irritation because of the massive expansion of tourist facilities and the encroachment of the industry on the local way of life. At the point of antagonism, the irritations of local people become more overt and the tourists are seen to be the source of all that is bad. Mutual politeness disappear. The final stage is reached when the environment, including the resource base which is the source of tourist attractions and the livelihood of the locals, has been changed irreversibly. The tourists and off-site brokers may come and go but the negative impacts of mass tourism are already imprinted in the consciousness of the locals, their culture, and the physical environment.

McGoodwin describes the damage caused by the tourism business, particularly in developing coastal communities as tourism-impact syndrome (1986: 132). The symptoms include some forms of sociocultural stresses and strains in the local community like loss of political and economic autonomy, loss of folklore and important institutions of traditional folk culture, social disorganization, and hostility toward tourists. Social disorganization particularly reflects radical changes in value orientations and in norms regarding social relations and maybe manifested in heightened desires for material objects, changes in norms regarding work and sexual behavior; drug abuse; pursuit of illusory life aspirations; feelings of alienation; the demise of charitable institution; loss of parental control and of respect for elders. These are the images created by tourism as an industry which is perceived to have turned bad along the way.

Guest-Host Dichotomy and Tourism System Discourses

From the perspective of Western society, tourism is often understood as a product of the individual decisions of tourists (Cheong and Miller (2000: 371). One of the earlier views advanced to explain the nature of tourism is the "guest-host dichotomy". According to this view, the relationship between tourists and locals is socioeconomic in character where tourists and locals interact either in a warm social milieu as "guests and hosts"

(Smith 1977) or in the economic market as "consumers and producers". This view of tourism focuses on the willingness of the host community to design touristic activities for the enjoyment of the tourists who can afford to pay the cost. The kind of deal established, however, has resulted in the blatant display of material consumerism by tourists and the commodification of the local culture by the tourism industry for the enjoyment of tourists. This demonstrates the one-sided domination and exploitation of the host community (Cheong and Miller 2000: 372).

Guest-host dichotomy (Fig. 1) captures the static hierarchical manifestation of the relationship of tourists and the local people in general but fails to appreciate the dynamics of how power revolves between them. It portrays a negative image of tourists as individuals who have the money to pay for their enjoyment at the expense of the local culture and environment. This model highlights the dominance of the tourists in carving the direction of the development of the industry in terms of facilities, services, and activities for their increased satisfaction. The experience of Boracay Island in Panay, Philippines where the tourist themselves and not the local brokers and residents in the island are the industry developers illustrates this (Smith 1992: 156). Although this reality is common in most developing countries (McGoodwin 1986, Cater 1993), this image of local tourism overlooks the dynamics of relationships and power in a tourist destination and underestimates the potential by which the local community could prevail over the tourists for its own advantage.

In the tourism system model, Miller and Auyong (1998: 3) extend the guest-host dichotomy to further differentiate the hosts, which include the brokers and the locals, from the guests. Brokers, categorized as private sector brokers or public sector brokers, consist of persons who pay professional attention to tourism in various ways. The private sector brokers are engaged in the business of tourism by providing touristic services and selling touristic products. On the other hand, the public sector brokers, as public officials, are engaged in the governance and manage-

ment of tourism. All of them maybe classified as on- or off-site brokers relative to where they currently reside or work.

There are also variants of private brokers aside from those engaged in the tourism business. They include the social movement brokers which are formal entities referred to as non-government organizations, environment organizations, and the like which assist in the planning, developing, managing, and monitoring of tourism activities in particular setting. The academic brokers are those in the academe who examine or research on tourism as part of basic science. The travel media brokers include the reporters and journalists who make comments about tourism through the media like print, broadcast, and the internet to inform the public of good tourist destinations or activities available. The last group consists of the consulting brokers who are tourism analysts, marketers, travel writers, and a variety of other independent entrepreneurs who provide consultancy services to government, private enterprise, and organizations regarding tourism issues and concerns.

Meanwhile, the locals consist of persons who reside in the general region of tourism routes and destinations but do not directly derive any income from tourism. Nevertheless, they are affected by it being permanent residents in the community. They may be indigenous locals who have settled in the community and have ancestral claims to the resources in the community or migrant locals who have their ancestral roots in other areas and are classified either as established or recently arrived migrants. The established migrants have already formed their families to the third generations, intermarried with the indigenous locals, and secured themselves properties in the community. The recently arrived migrants have at least a year's residence in the community and have as yet accumulated less properties. Lastly, there are the seasonal locals who have no permanent residence in the community but are moving on and off because this is the location of the resources they work with such as farming and harvesting, or fishing for certain seasonal species of fish. Predictably, each group of locals

described above may demonstrate different degree of interests or reactions toward the tourism business in the community owing to their differential experiences and attachment to local culture and environment.

The tourists as mentioned earlier are strangers to the community but travel here or to other tourist destinations for relatively short visits for pleasure. Although most of them ultimately return home when vacation is over, some of them may decide to stay more or less permanently in places that have attracted their interests, become assimilated with the local community, eventually marry, and engage in the tourism business.

This dynamics in tourism shows that the tourism system model does not only treat the human elements of the tourism industry as a typology to compare or contrast one from the other. It regards the tourism industry as a system composed of interacting actors whose status and roles also vary anytime depending on available opportunities and existing circumstances (Cheong and Miller 2000).
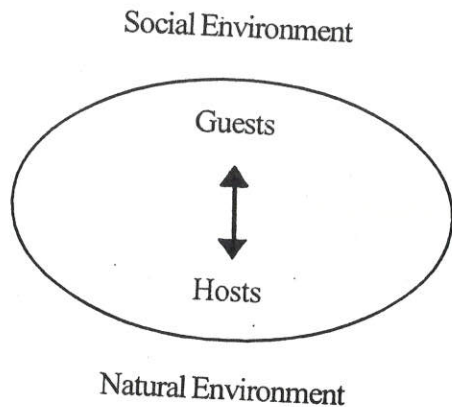

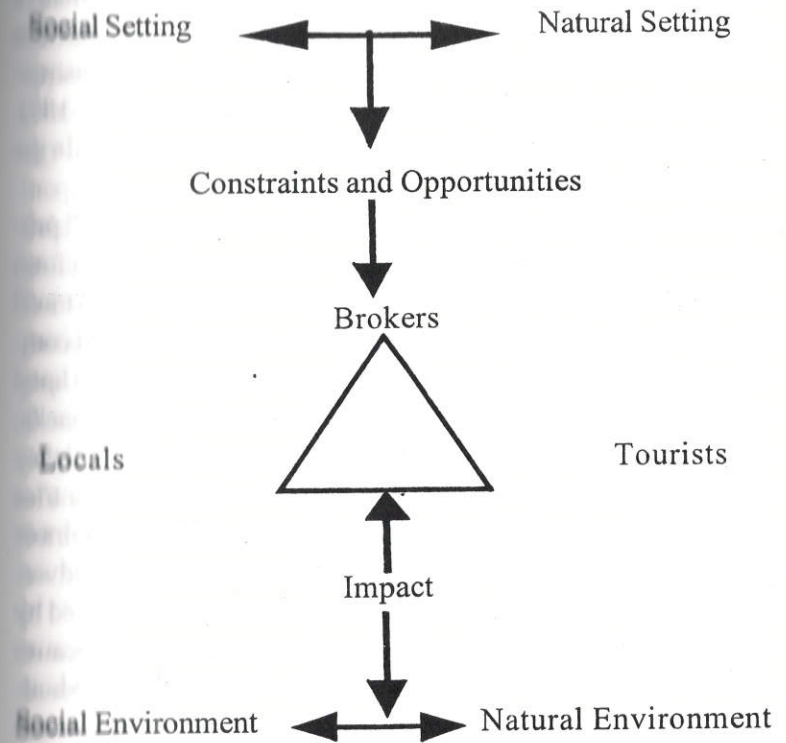**Fig. 1. Tourist-Local Interaction Using Guest-Host Dichotomy**

Fig. 2. Sociological Model of the Tourism System (after Miller and Auyong 1998)

Ecotourism as a Social Construct

The growing awareness of local communities of ecological degeneration and their sensitivity to the corruption of traditional way of life because of tourism have made them more conscious of weighing the trade-offs with the economic gains it brings. Because of this, the tourism industry, including the tourists themselves, are also becoming aware of the need to recreate their image to one that is identifiable with environmental protection and cultural preservation. The industry is particularly impelled to rid itself of the negative consequences brought about by mass tour-

ism. In the past years, it has been trying to promote an alternative image that is acceptable to the host communities. Miller describes the processes of recreating tourism image or the social construction of ecotourism as restoration and enhancement (1993: 189). The first aims to repair a damaged identity or image while the second refers more to a complete transformation.

A subgroup of tourists described as "backpackers" provides an example of a different image of tourists. Deviating from the typical image of conventional camera-toting tourists who travel in packaged and guided tours, look good and sophisticated compared to the locals, eat expensive food, and live in furnished hotel or resort, backpackers only carry with them their backpacks, from which they derive their name, containing practically all they need when they move through different sites in various countries on their list in search for unspoiled sites. They travel in pairs or cliques but not in bigger groups, and outside of the usual advertised tourist routes and destinations except those introduced by other backpackers, relying on maps to guide their way. Because of these characteristics, backpackers are considered as low-budget travelers who depart from mass tourism. However, the nature of their travel and expenditure may not sustain a viable travel industry and, therefore, may disappoint the local brokers in terms of short term cash benefits (Smith 1992: 157).

Another group of tourists whose interests are adventure and the search for the exotic consists usually of young professionals. Like the backpackers, they are in search of opportunities to renew intimacy with unspoiled nature but unlike the backpackers, they are usually not low-budget travelers. Tourist businesses which cater to this group have come up with touristic ventures that are gaining support as an alternative to mass tourism (Butler 1992: 31). Popularly known as ecotourism, these ventures are meant to be a transformation from mass tourism to a small or medium-scale industry that allows tourists to enjoy natural beauty as well as educate them of the need to protect the environment for the sake of the future generations.

Ecotourism is known in literatures by varied names that glitter with images of being environmentally-friendly, nature oriented, appropriate, soft, sustainable, green, responsible, ethical, and other related terms (Valentine 1991: 476). It is also promoted as a strategy in coastal resource management program. For example, the income from ecotourism prevents local fishers from destructive fishing activities and makes them appreciate the economic and aesthetic value of the marine environment (Flores 1999; White, Ross and Flores 2000). Because of this, it requires the active participation of the local community in the planning in order to get popular support particularly as ecotourism development comes along with the declaration of protected areas, marine or landscape, that deprives local people access to their traditional source of livelihood. It is through the economic benefits of ecotourism venture and other alternative enterprises, not directly related to traditional resources, that local people are motivated to support it. Nevertheless, ecotourism has to be regulated by local brokers to ensure economic benefits and to minimize environmental destruction.

But the development of any ecotourism program has also gained criticism from other sectors of the academe and society, like the hardcore environmentalists and policy analysts, for its being another type of mass tourism in the making (Butler 1992: 37). This claim results from observations of the way certain tourist destinations originally developed for nature-seekers end up becoming devastated. Sites that start by the "discovery" of a few tourists eventually become popular through the spread of information, often by word of mouth, from one tourist to another. Most often, such places may not even have amenities until local entrepreneurs step in to provide facilities to accommodate the arrival of a growing number of tourists. Moreover, the pioneering tourists, usually foreigners, also become interested in investing money in developing the site to accommodate more influx of tourists often without any development plan. This kind of situation has created problem in the management of the ecotourism industry of

Boracay Island which started as a backyard industry of on-site brokers. Because it failed to design a master development plan to regulate the building of more structures in the island, Boracay is now overrun by a mushrooming of resorts, diving shops, and restaurants owned by foreigners and their local business partners (Smith 1992).

The above situation exemplifies a fact that when the development of facilities for the use of tourists come under the control of agencies, whether public or private, the institutionalization of tourism or emergence of mass tourism is inevitable. Local brokers are overtaken by large-scale brokers who usually come, according to Naronha, from outside the local community, and often from outside the country (1977 *cited in* de Kadt 1979: 5). Boracay Island exemplifies this trend where foreigners have successfully established local social networks through marriage, friendship, and other social means that will enable them to engage in the tourism business. On the other hand, the local people in the peripheries of tourist destinations not only benefit little from this kind of tourism, but they are adversely affected by tourism development in many ways.

The way for ecotourism development to erase its negative image as another form of mass tourism is for it to remain true to its objectives. As an alternative to mass tourism, ecotourism must be rooted on a planned, organized, and integrated program that includes the consensual participation of the brokers, locals, and tourists (Grenier, Kaae, Miller and Mobley 1993). Requiring social preparation for its introduction, ecotourism concept must be well understood by the local community and the brokers of the program (Crawford, Balgos and Pagdilao 2000: 22). This will enable them to manage the influx of tourists without compromising the state of the environment and the culture of people. To make ecotourism truly sustainable and dispel the bad image and results created by mass tourism, Cater has proposed a set of criteria (1993: 86). First, it must meet the needs of the host population in terms of improved living standards, both the short and long term.

Second, it must satisfy the demands of a growing number of tourists and continue to attract them in order to meet the first aim. And third, it must safeguard the natural environment in order to achieve the two preceding criteria.

The above criteria require that ecotourism development must have a long-term and comprehensive plan that is integrated with the existing land use or coastal management plan of the local community. This should enable the planners to foresee its impact on the other components of the ecosystem like the marine areas, forest, mangroves, and others (Fig. 3) in order to mitigate its negative effects. Similarly, the constraints and opportunities present in the immediate ecosystem are to be taken as considerations in the process of planning, developing, and managing ecotourism destinations and activities.

In order to ensure the sustainability of econtourism, regular monitoring is required (White, Ross and Flores 2000: 226). Carter (1993: 85) and McKercher (1993: 133), emphasize that an ecotourism development must adopt sustainability as an ideology in the strictest sense and protect the environment. It must always be understood that ecotourism is a resource-dependent industry (McKecher 1993: 131) and its future relies so much on the high quality of the natural resources that lure tourists. Indiscriminate development activities related to tourism and other industries must be regulated to prevent the permanent restructuring of the environment and its displacement in the future.
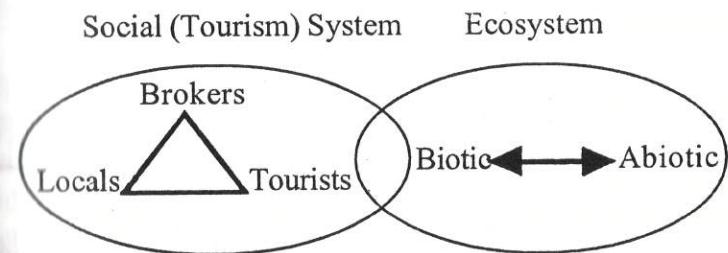
Social (Tourism) System   Ecosystem

Fig. 3. Tourism System- Ecosystem Interaction in Ecotourism Development (after Miller and Auyong 1998)

Modifying Involvement in Ecotourism

Ecotourism as a strategy for promoting sustainable resource management will work positively only if the brokers, locals, and tourists behave in a tolerable level that does not create damage to the local ecosystem. To achieve this end, brokers, locals, and individual tourists are expected to have a fuller understanding of their respective roles as they interact in a certain touristic setting. The theoretical basis of this view is derived from the implications of the typology of involvement model in relation to leisure and work introduced by Miller (2001) who combined the concepts of the *sacred* by sociologist Emile Durkheim and *serious leisure* by sociologist Roht Stebbins with his concept of *expressive work*. Miller argues that although two individuals may be engaged in identical activity which may be categorized as leisure or work, the quality of their respective experiences may vary because of the subjective meaning they attached to this particular activity (Fig. 4).

SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE

	Mundane	Sacred
Leisure (as Tourists)	Casual Leisure	Serious Leisure
Work (as Brokers and Locals)	Instrumental work	Expressive Work

ACTIVITY

Fig. 4. Typology of Involvement in Ecotourism (adapted from Miller 2001)

The kind of experiences derived from leisure and work are expected to differ because they require different modes of expertise and types of reward. Any activity that gives pleasure is leisure while that which provides monetary reward is work. To some, however, a single activity could also be a source of pleasure and money reward at the same time. For the purpose of this paper, the travels and activities of tourists are seen as geared toward the realization of leisure while the work brokers perform, along with their expected role of making tourists achieve the maximum satisfaction, will be seen primarily as a source of monetary reward. The same is true with the work locals do for a living in the community which serves as a tourist destination.

Tourists who consider their travel as a sacred activity are said to have internalized the behaviors expected of them in a particular tourist destination in order to maximize the appropriate kind of pleasure associated with the activity. However, studies warn that not all tourists are automatically environmentally sensitive breed (Cater 1993: 88). It has been observed that many of them consider a touristic activity casually and are not concerned with its outcome. They do not manifest conscious effort to demonstrate appropriate behavior and become indiscriminately destructive in the end. Since they pay for such experience, they might even assume that it is their right to use whatever resources available for their satisfaction. Besides, they are only visiting a destination for a few days without any plan of returning. In effect, they demonstrate destructive leisure and not serious leisure in its real sense.

Meanwhile, brokers who consider their work as sacred exercise equal efforts to satisfy the craving of tourists for excitement as well as as to safeguard the local culture and environment which they are bound to protect and preserve as one major ethical consideration of an ecotourism program. They consider it an achievement if they are able to realize the ideals of their work which they highly value. In contrast, brokers who consider their work as an instrument for more material gain may sacrifice the

integrity of the local culture and environment for their selfish interest to maximize material reward. Similarly, locals who consider their work as sacred find achievement in producing food for their respective families as well as for the market in the immediate environment and at the same time aim to sustain its productivity. For them, the resource base is important not only for its inherent value as a source of livelihood but also for its beauty and bounty which they as well as the tourists can enjoy. Since they consider fishing as sacred and their lives as connected to that of the sea, they treat the sea as sacred which has to be protected and nurtured. This kind of behavior contrasts to that of locals who exploit their resource base to the point of exhausting and destroying it. For example, local fishers who exploit the marine environment by using blast and poison such as cyanide as methods of extracting fish consider the sea as only an instrument for economic gain in terms of a bountiful catch. They do not appreciate the fact that the kind of work they do depends so much on the diversity and sustainability of the marine environment.

The preceding discussion shows that leisure and work activities demonstrated by two or more individuals in any tourist destination could well complement each other as long as they consider what they do as sacred. The two activities have to be exercised within the principle of sustainability which suggests that the use and benefits derived in a particular resource setting should be within its carrying capacity relative to present needs and those of the future generation. Ecotourism program depends so much on the natural characteristics of a tourist destination. If these natural features are damaged by the exploitative nature of touristic activities promoted by brokers as well as by the technology the locals used to extract food resources, then tourists, brokers, and locals alike will experience the same loss, although the most negatively affected by this loss will always be the locals. The private brokers could move out their capital and relocate their business to other tourist destinations while

tourists could choose to spend their money and time elsewhere. This is the sort of unethical conduct that must be discouraged.

It is therefore the role of the public brokers, represented by the government and environmental non-government organizations, to coordinate their efforts and resources to develop mechanisms that will influence private brokers, locals, and tourists to prioritize environmental welfare above material or psychological gains. However, this does not exempt them from demonstrating first and foremost their expressive relationship with their work and its ideals.

Power Dynamics for Sustainable Ecotourism

Under the tourism system model, power is seen as circulating and this dynamics may be used to design a sustainable ecotourism program. This is anchored on the assumption that since all the elements of the tourism system has relative power, each could be mobilized toward a negotiated goal that satisfies their corresponding interest. The Foucauldian analysis of power dynamics as applied on tourism by Cheong and Miller (2000) points out specific instances by which the behavior among the actors of the tourism system can be influenced by each other relative to certain condition. The insights derived here could be used in realizing the objectives of ecotourism as an alternative to mass tourism in its truest nature.

While it is recognized that tourists make decisions during their travel, brokers could also create the demand on which tourists base their choices. According to Miller and Auyong, this is so because the effective presentation of a touristic product actually generates preferences (1998: 11, 13). It is well known that various marketing strategies and media can influence tourists before they even reach their destination. Meanwhile, tourists become helpless because they are already physically detached from their usual social networks when they travel, and in order to survive in

a relatively strange social construct, they are compelled to adjust in a way that is acceptable to on-site brokers and locals in control of the destination they want to visit (Cheong and Miller 2000: 380). This is particularly the case in packaged and guided tours. Nevertheless, even tourists in self-guided tours, such as the backpackers, find their movements limited and structured by the guidebook, the map, or the signpost which are still the creation of brokers and locals.

Obviously, when tourists are in strange places, they are vulnerable to be compelled by brokers, both private and public, to behave and function in certain way for self-protection. The brokers, on the other hand, try to give them the impression that they are in good hands. For example, the recent political turmoil in the Philippines that led to the ouster of former President Joseph Estrada and the installation of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo as President, sent alarming signals to foreign tourists to cancel their trips to the country. Moreover, the incidence of kidnappings of foreign tourists and attacks on tourists destinations in the south of the Philippines further intensified tourists' apprehension about their safety. As a reaction, the tourism officials of the country issued an advisory to other countries that travel to the Philippines continues to be safe and orderly, tourism activities are on normal operations (*Filipino-American Bulletin*, May 1-31, 2001, p. 6), and that tourist kidnappings and attacks in southern Philippines are only isolated incidents. Compelled to create an image that everything is under control, both public and private brokers "embarked on an aggressive media and promotion blitz to preserve the confidence of international and domestic tourists and deflect *the* negative image *of the country*" (Nawal 2001, www.inq7.net/nat/may/26, underscoring mine).

The above observations show that brokers know the condition of a tourist destination better than the tourists. This knowledge put brokers in a better position to control unacceptable behaviors and demands of tourists which may imperil the operation of the ecotourism ventures they manage. At the same time, bro-

kers also have the responsibility to ensure the security of tourists not just for the sake of making money. Cheong and Miller (2000: 381) argue that brokers have enormous influence in maintaining the integrity of tourist destinations. They particularly relate the fact that:

Because of their proximity, park guards watch over tourists to see if they litter; guides protect, oversee and educate them about how to act properly, and offer them interpretations of historic sites, cultures, and customs; restaurant employees instruct them in what and how to eat. Subsequently, brokers as agents in a variety of guises constrain their movements, behaviors, and even thoughts, and act as a powerful force in the system.... Off-site brokers—those who are not in direct contact with tourists- also manage tours and contribute to tourism plans and strategies.

On the other hand, although the locals are not directly involved in catering to tourists they could still express how they feel about them during their brief and occasional encounters through their actions, gestures, and other forms of communication (Cheong and Miller 2000: 385). This becomes more intense when they are in groups by which they could manifest collectively their attitudes of disfavor or liking toward tourists. The tourists and their attending guides may be able to catch the message which can lead them to quickly understand where they might go and what they might do. This is an illustration of an informal mechanism by which locals could influence tourists to display behaviors that are not detrimental to local culture and the environment. They could also form organized coalitions to prohibit certain touristic activities in the community if they found them to have negative consequences.

It has been observed that conservation movements in developed countries that have adopted a more bio-centric approach to environmental preservation are unlikely to support the sustainability of any type of tourism activities (McKercher 1993). It is believed that in favor of environmental protection and preser-

vation without any human interference, developed countries encourage the development of ecotourism ventures in developing countries, shifting the responsibilities upon these countries of balancing the cost and benefits of environmental protection and development ventures, like ecotourism. As the case of the Philippines, which has already staged two non-violent revolutions, exemplifies, people in developing countries are no longer passive and are more willing to publicly express their resentment against political or ecological issues and conditions which affect their lives. Studies indicate that with the institutionalization of environmental non-government and people's organizations in the country, people are now in a much better position to manage the negative impacts of ecotourism.

The Case of Apo Island, Philippines

In order to provide proper context for the preceding discussions, this paper will examine the case of Apo Island using the tourism system model and assess its applicability in the gathering of basic information, planning, developing, and managing ecotourism in order to deconstruct the prevailing biased guest-host image of the tourism industry. Ecotourism activities in Apo Island are believed to have been an offshoot of the success of its community-based coastal resource management (CB-CRM) program. Although ecotourism is not its immediate objective (Alan T. White, pers. comm. May 28, 2001), the significant contribution of the community-based coastal resource management program to the economy of the local as well as regional government could not be underestimated. At present, plans are underway to regulate tourism activities to ensure sustainability and to minimize their impact on the ecological integrity.

Marine attractions. Measuring only about 74 hectares, Apo Island is located in the south of Negros Island, Central Visayas, Philippines, about 25 kilometers from the mainland. It is of volca-

nic origin, has five sandy white beaches, two lagoons, patches of mangroves, steep cliffs immediately overlooking the sea, and extensive fringing reefs of bio-diverse marine species. It is accessible by motorized outrigger operated by local fishers or resort owners in the mainland and other nearby island of Negros. Apo Island is inhabited by 129 households or a total population of 684 (as of May 2000 census by NCSO) with an annual growth rate of 7.17 percent since 1970. Owing to unfavorable soil condition and limited arable space of the island for agriculture, the major source of livelihood of more than 95 percent of the households is fishing. Other occupations engaged by households and individuals include running small business known as *sari-sari* store which sell household needs, fish trading to the mainland, vending of souvenir items to tourist; and paid work at the local resorts as carpenters, cook, or food servers.

Overfishing as well as destructive fishing with the use of blast and poison were common practice in the island before the 1980s. At that time, island residents considered this type of fishing as the fastest way to accumulate, albeit short-term, benefits from the marine environment. During the next two decades, the concerted efforts of the local government unit and the *barangay* government of Apo Island, Silliman University, and the island residents to end destructive fishing and work for the protection and conservation of the island environment have already yielded positive results. Presently, local fishers do not only enjoy abundant and sustained fish catch, but have also started to realize the benefits from ecotourism as tourists started visiting the island. Yet, this development was not part of the plan when scientists from Silliman University first initiated the development of the marine areas surrounding the island as a marine reserve to establish a fish sanctuary whose main purpose was to ensure the sustainability of fish catch for the subsistence fishing households of Apo Island. Nonetheless, as tourists started coming into the island, residents have been encouraged to collect donations from them for activities such as snorkeling and diving (Alan T. White, pers. comm.,

May 28, 2001). This additional benefit has reinforced the economic value of their conservation efforts.

Yet the establishment of the marine conservation program in the island was not easy. Fishing households initially resisted the creation of a reserve because this limited their access to favored fishing grounds. A compromise was reached when the *barangay* council passed a resolution designating a portion of the fishing grounds as fish sanctuary and closing this to fishing activities. The resolution provided the legal basis for the establishment of the marine reserve and the fish sanctuary. Outside the sanctuary fishing is permitted but regulated to include only the use of approved fishing gears like hook and line, spear fishing with out scuba, fish traps, and others. Only when the local fishers have internalized fishing as an expressive work were they able to contribute to the sustainability of the bio-diversity of the island resources.

Institutional recognition and protection. Today, Apo Island serves as a model and a learning site for community-based coastal resource management program in the Philippines. The economic gains the residents derive from sustainable fishing activities and ecotourism are enough evidence to convince other islands and coastal communities to duplicate this program in their respective areas. Moreover, it has become a learning site for community leaders elsewhere to learn about coastal resource management project from the local leaders and residents. In 1997, Apo island received national recognition as the best community-managed coral reef project from a scientific organization in the country.

Because of its success, the Apo Island project has gained international recognition and is now part of the academic curriculum of a number of local and international universities, such as Silliman University in the Philippines, the School of Marine Affairs of the University of Washington, and the University of Rhode Island in the United States, respectively. The textbook authored by Kay and Alder (1999) entitled *Coastal Planning and Management* used in the Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) course

at the University of Washington contains a section featuring Apo Island. Other international journals on coastal management and websites dealing with environmental issues and concerns have popularized the island not only among the scientific community but among tourists as well. The lesson it particularly imparts is the importance of a community network and empowerment to the success and sustainability of a coastal resource management program.

To further protect the ecological integrity of the island and its sustainability, an eight-member Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) was organized in 1996. This Board is responsible for drafting policies and regulations and monitoring any development activities in the island. Its membership includes three representatives from the island in addition to representatives coming from the national, regional, and provincial governments, and the academe (i.e. Silliman University). The creation of the board was a result of the declaration under Presidential Proclamation No. 438 in 1994 of Apo Island as a nationally recognized protected landscape and seascape. A total area of 691.45 hectares is now placed within the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS).

Economic opportunities. Earlier, Vogt (1997) has examined the economic benefits of tourism in the marine reserve of Apo Island. A recent study by Cadiz and Calumpong (2000) of the Marine Laboratory of Silliman University gives a more recent and detailed analysis of these economic benefits. Their study shows that a total of 14,361 tourists came to Apo Island from April 1999 to March 2000, or an average of 1,196.75 per month. The number daily ranged from 26 to 54 during the study period with April as the peak month. September registered the smallest number of visitors given the fact that this month falls within the rainy season in the Philippines. The report shows that majority (62 per cent) of the tourists were foreigners while only 38 per cent were Filipinos. Among the foreigners, the Japanese dominated followed

by the Germans, Americans, and other nationalities. Pleasure diving has been reported as the major activity engaged in by the tourists followed by snorkeling, diving lessons, and ordinary picnic. The study also reports that research and educational fieldtrips were likewise significant activities of others visitors to the island.

According to a previous study conducted by Murphy, Ablong, and White, the growing number of tourists visiting Apo Island brought over three times the benefits attributed to improved fishing (1999: 7). However, this claim appears to have been based on gross estimate of tourism income and did not consider the social distribution of such income. Nonetheless, it has been observed that the coming of tourists, both local and foreign, to Apo Island has provided the locals, particularly women, an opportunity to earn additional income through peddling souvenir items such as T-shirts, locally woven mats, *malongs,* and *sarongs* to visitors. Besides the additional income, these souvenir items serve to advertise the island to other tourists.

Income data from the study of Cadiz and Calumpong (2000) point out that businesses catering to tourists in Apo Island earned PhP 11,565,021 (US$ 289,125 at $1 to PhP40) in 1999. Of this amount, as much as 53 percent went directly to the island brokers. Boat operators, who also include fishers, earned a total of PhP 4,106,600 (US$ 102,665) for that year in ferrying tourists to and from the island. Twenty-five (25) percent of these boat owners are from the island while the rest were from the neighboring islands of Negros, Cebu, Bohol, Siquijor and northern Mindanao. Meanwhile, the diving business also grossed PhP 5,755,000 (US$ 143,871) from tanks and gear rental with the diving shops located right in Apo Island cornering 76 percent of the market. According to the study, brokers of this type of business reportedly earned that much because 45 percent of the tourists of the island were divers.

Meanwhile, when the PAMB increased the rates for tourist entry fees to Apo Island, the Marine Management Committee (MMC) of the island, composed of local residents, also reported an increase in its revenue. The study of Cadiz and Calumpong (2000) shows that after only four months, PAMB was able to collect more than PhP 509,573 (US$ 12,739) compared to only about PhP 29,916 (US$ 748) in eight months before its operation. Seventy-five (75) percent of the amount collected is retained in Apo Island for the development and maintenance of the Protected Landscape and Seascape projects in the island. The remaining 25 percent goes to the National Integrated Protected Area Fund. Meanwhile, 15 percent of the revenues derived from tourist fees is set aside by the MMC for livelihood projects of island residents. Since the island gets only a total of PhP 380,000 (US$ 9,500) in Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) during that same period from the local government (Pal 2001), this additional income is immensely useful for the island's development and environmental projects .

Democratizing the benefits. Needless to mention, the thousands of dollars derived from ecotourism in Apo Island contributes considerable revenues to the government. At the same time, it suggests its profitability to brokers, either off- or on-site, who invest far larger capital than the local women, boat-operators, small store owners, and households who provide accommodations to tourists in the island. However, while it is reasonable to expect that those who invest more capital would profit more from the ecotourism business in the island, it is a fact that it is the locals who are ultimately responsible for attracting the tourists because of the beautiful marine reserve and fish sanctuary that they maintain. As such, they have the inherent right to claim part of the profit from tourism in the island, perhaps indirectly from revenues invested in livelihood and infrastructure projects and in the maintenance and monitoring of the island's fragile marine environment.

Unfortunately, up to March 2001 Apo Island has still to receive its share of the money PAMB collected because all the income from tourist fees had been remitted to the national office where bureaucratic structures and protocols delay its release. As

a result, the *bantay dagat* (sea watch or guard) members, garbage collectors, and those in charge of the Apo Protected Landscape and Seascape (APLS) assistance center who collect entry fees and provide instructions to tourists while they are in the island have yet to be paid their honoraria.

Livelihood projects for Apo Island residents and some infrastructure projects in the island have likewise been stalled because of the absence of necessary funds. The gains from these projects are expected to be the social benefits of ecotourism on the locals of Apo Island who are not directly doing business with tourists. As the tourism income report showed, only the private brokers, rather than the local fishing households, derived great benefits from tourism activities in the island.

Ecological threats. In view of the growing number of tourists visiting the island, the members of the community have expressed apprehensions that mass tourism may soon characterize Apo Island as it has destroyed Boracay Island. They fear that mass tourism will have adverse effects such as water pollution and overcrowding on the island as well as sociocultural stresses and strains on the local people (Smith 1992). According to them, tourist divers, especially the amateurs, have caused harm to the reefs by trampling on fragile coral beds, touching, or even plucking off parts of corals to bring home as souvenirs. These forms of irresponsible behavior show ignorance of the importance of fragile marine resources as well as indifference toward the efforts to preserve these resources. Furthermore, the continuous and unregulated number of divers in the reserve area at the same time are also believed to scare fish away and locals fear that there will be no more fish to catch if this continues (Oracion 1998: 49).

Garbage, especially the non-biodegradable kind, has also started to pose an ecological threat in the island not only in the terrestrial areas but as well as in the marine areas especially the coral reefs. Common garbage noticed are plastic containers of mineral water and food items which are indiscriminately thrown

by careless tourists. Local residents have noticed a worsening garbage problem even in places which are not inhabited (Pal 2001). A study on the sociocultural impact of the marine reserve in the island by graduate students of Environmental Science and Coastal Resource Management of Silliman University considered garbage to be a serious problem as a consequence of more tourist landing. This is aggravated by the absence of a solid waste management system in the island. Meanwhile, oil spill, irresponsible anchoring, and the vibrating sounds of pumpboat engine within the marine reserve have also been identified as factors disturbing the fragile marine organisms in the area.

Regulatory measures. Off-site business brokers and tourists may find their movements in Apo Island more controlled now than in the past with the establishment of the PAMB. Board Resolution No. 1, series of 1999 authorizes PAMB to regulate tourist landing and activities in Apo Island order to prevent further damage to the island fragile ecosystem. The collection of entry fee as resource user's fee has been introduced as a necessary mechanism to raise funds to mitigate or off-set any ecological damage that may take place in the island. Tourist entry fee is PhP 20.00 or 50 cents for foreign tourists and PhP 10.00 or 25 cents for Filipino tourists. Fees are also charged for specific tourist activities like scuba diving, snorkeling, camping, filming, lodging at cottages, using the picnic shed, mooring, and anchoring. The amount varies in terms of the types and the extent of the exercise of these activities. Meanwhile, PAMB has also limited the number of divers and snorkelers per day to the island. The board resolution specifically indicates that only a maximum of 15 divers are allowed each day and no more than eight snorkelers are permitted at any one time in order to minimize the cumulative impact of human activities in the reserve area.

Tourists are also advised to use the designated entry and exit points in the fish sanctuary. Sports spear fishing with scuba is strictly prohibited and divers are explicitly disallowed from wear-

ing gloves during diving to prevent them from touching or pricking the corals. Similarly, swimming and bathing are not allowed in the area. All tourists including their carriers or boats are required to register at the APLS assistance center where they are assigned to guides and watchers who are specifically instructed to monitor their activities. Furthermore, in order that the fishing activity of island fishers will not be disturbed, divers are not allowed to dive or approach within 100 meters of the designated fishing area in the island or where the fishers are stationed. Anchoring is likewise regulated corresponding to the weight of the boats and the areas in the marine reserve where these boats are situated. For this purpose, certain areas have been designated with buoys for anchoring and mooring to guide boat operators when they dock. Violations of these regulations are to be reported by the sea watch or the local fishers to the *barangay* captain for appropriate actions.

Finally, in order to prevent further congestion, given the limited space in the island for infrastructure development, the building of additional resort is no longer permitted. The existing two resorts are owned by foreigners who were former tourists to the island but later married locals and eventually engaged in the tourism business. Meanwhile, resorts owned mainly by foreigners in partnership with some Filipinos are mushrooming along the coastline on the mainland directly facing Apo Island. Moreover, existing though implicit regulations also discourage migration of mainland people into the island except those who marry a local. Although this particular regulation has no legal basis yet because this is not included in PAMB regulations, it has become a norm mutually recognized by the community in consideration of the limited space in the island and the significant population growth by marriage and natural process over the past two decades.

Tasks ahead. The state of ecotourism in Apo Island shows the dynamic interaction of public brokers (local government and PAMB) and the private brokers (resort and dive operators, travel agencies, boat operators, small business operators, academe, environmental organizations and others), either off- or on-site, the foreign and local tourists, and the local fishing households. Each plays important roles in making ecotourism in Apo Island work and eventually maintaining its sustainability. But the present condition of the island is critically threatened by indiscriminate productive and touristic abuse and unless mitigating actions are taken, irreversible damage is inevitable. Given the pro-environment attitudes upheld by the locals in the island, it is obvious then that the present threats come from the outside. It is equally imperative that those who have interests over the bio-diversity of the island, both the public and private brokers, engage in expressive work within their domains in order to sustain the benefits derived from ecotourism in the island.

Moreover, there is a need to re-educate visitors about the island's fragile coral reefs so that they will take more responsibility in maintaining the island's present improved environmental status. Resort owners are also expected to exemplify environmentally friendly practices in their dealings with their guests and educate them about the existing PAMB regulations for Apo Island tourists.

Meanwhile, it is the task of the MMC officials and residents of Apo Island to constantly remind island tourists and visitors upon their arrival to engage in responsible leisure to help protect their environment. They have to be more vigilant in monitoring and apprehending anyone who violates any environmental regulations while in the island. The women's organization in the island takes greater responsibility for this task through some of its members who, in selling souvenirs to visitors, have more contact with tourists and are therefore in a better position to monitor the latter's behavior. Likewise, it is important for MMC to develop an interpretive center showing the relief map of the island in which restricted as well as accessible landscape and seascape are clearly marked. As well, MMC must emphasize the value of protecting the whole island ecosystem not only for tourism purposes but for

its survival and for the welfare of the locals who depend on them. Thus, ecotourism in Apo Island scan erve as a forum for educating tourists, brokers, as well as the locals to appreciate the aesthetic and productive values of healthy coral reefs.

Research agenda. The influence of urban based tourist establishments and businesses on Apo Island's ecotourism needs to be examined (Marc L. Miller, pers. comm., May 31, 2001). This should include not only those in the mainland of southern Negros but as well as those in other parts of the region that bring tourists to the island. Equally worthy of investigation is the connection between the economic opportunities brought about by ecotourism and the productivity of women and the subsequent effect on gender relationships in households.

Furthermore, there is a need to assess the sociopsychological and cultural changes among the local fishing household for evidence of social awareness, improved self-esteem, increased aspirations for their children, and the replacement or loss of traditional knowledge and tools as a result of their interaction with foreigners. Of similar importance to researchers should be the evaluation of informal educational programs aimed at changing the environmental attitudes of off-site business brokers and tourists to the island in order. Finally, the biophysical conditions of the coral reefs, fish quantity, water quality and level of garbage pollution in the island need to be regularly monitored for purposes of mitigation.

Conclusions

Tourism is a social construction and its ups and downs are the results of how the actors involved interact with each other and the natural environment. Its social and economic values which resulted from the negotiation among various stakeholders have tremendously affected its development and present status. The growing recognition of ecotourism as a sustainable alternative to

mass tourism is a product of such negotiation. Studies have shown that the development of tourism as an activity and as an industry is very much a result of chaotic display of colorful and ugly images that represent its good and bad times, respectively. The present tourism discourse has more or less successfully constructed in our minds that ecotourism is good while mass tourism is bad. But the battle continues because the proponents of the contrary discourse remain skeptical over the future of ecotourism, seeing it as another type of mass tourism.

It is a fact that ecotourism, if not regulated and and its damage mitigated, could cause irreversible environmental destruction. This explains why bio-centric environmental movements resist any type of tourism development in protected areas. However, this paper tries to argue that the success of ecotourism depends on how the actors (i.e. brokers, locals, and tourists) involved in the industry work to achieve its main objective which is the care for the environment. The case of Apo Island shows that this is possible when appropiate mechanisms are in place and all actors involved are aware of their respective rights as well as responsibilities.

For example, the presence of PAMB to check the increasing threats to the ecological integrity of Apo Island demonstrates the dominant role of a public broker because of its legal mandate. The PAMB has thus become a pool of influence and power in which different sorts of brokers from the national, provincial, and local governments, community organizations, academic organizations, and the local residents interact. This favorable development has institutionalized the mechanism of resource management in the island while further strengthening the capacity of the community to enforce any management measures developed in order to sustain the ecological and economic viability of the island's fishing and ecotourism as interlocking industries.

It is time for all those involved in the environmental, tourism, and development programs in Apo Island to come together again and finally draw a schema defining how the tourism system and

the marine ecosystem should behave and interact. (Alan T. White, pers. comm., May 28, 2001). This activity must be guided by the vision and mission of development Apo Island has that is anchored on the ideology of environmental and social (i.e. cultural and gender) sensitivity and sustainability.

Acknowledgments

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