Ecotourism: a Tool for Community Development Panacea or Mere Rhetoric?

The case of Puerto Princesa, Palawan Island in the Philippines

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Abstract

The concept of ecotourism has been widely misunderstood and misused. This undermines some of its aims when it is put in practice. In theory, one of the principles of ecotourism is bringing benefits to the local communities at the destination site. Benefiting the local communities, in turn, offers an opportunity for community development of the local populations (particularly in poor countries). But, in practice, as the concept of ecotourism is misused, it has been documented that the local communities have not always been directly involved and have not benefited from ecotourism projects; consequently, community development has also been undermined.

The present study aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the concept of ecotourism, as a means to community development, and finding the links between these two concepts. In addition, two case-studies in the Philippines – each case-study composed by a community and a community-based ecotourism initiative- have been analyzed in order to explore the ways in which ecotourism could support community development at the implementation stage, so as to find the correspondence between conceptualization and implementation.

From the conceptual analysis, it has been suggested that in theory ecotourism has a great potential as a tool for community development. This is supported by the fact that some principles of ecotourism could lead to the achievement of some of the aims of community development. However, when the concept of ecotourism is put into practice, several limitations are encountered, which undermine the community development aims.

This study identifies such opportunities and limitations. Then, it provides recommendations towards a better understanding of the concept of ecotourism, and towards a better implementation to achieve its aims. The model of the tourism value chain is used to illustrate the community-based ecotourism initiatives proposed for the two communities in the Philippines, and to identify the elements needed for a proper implementation of ecotourism.

Key Words: ecotourism, community-based ecotourism, community development, tourism value chain, Philippines, local participation.

Executive Summary

Tourism has been chosen by many countries as a means of economic development. It offers the opportunity to create jobs, generate revenues for the local people, and increase the national income. However, as the industry has expanded, it has been acknowledged its social and environmental consequences. As a response to this, the principles of sustainability started to be applied in the tourism industry to ensure: a) the optimal use of the natural resources; b) respect to socio-cultural features of the host communities; and, c) long-term economic benefits for contributing to poverty alleviation. Public awareness also started to grow, campaigning for responsible tourism which counteracts the social and environmental issues brought by mainstream tourism. That is how other niche markets of tourism started to be developed, bringing up ideas like being responsible, green, sustainable, low impact, culture respectful, and so on. Beginning in the early 1990's, ecotourism started to grow quickly and became a hot topic for the tourism industry.

In general terms, the concept of ecotourism entails responsible travel to natural areas, support for conservation initiatives, minimization of impacts, education, and benefits for the host communities. A more elaborated concept of "community-based ecotourism" highlights the involvement of the local communities in ecotourism activities as part of the planning, management, and control; as well as the main beneficiaries of the gains from such activity. The supporters of ecotourism conceive it as the panacea for the issues brought by mainstream tourism, and as a tool for development especially for poor countries. But the concept has been widely used and misused in different ways, which has also attracted many critics.

In theory, one of the principles of ecotourism is bringing benefits to the local communities at the destination site, which in turn, offers an opportunity for community development of the local populations. In practice, as the concept of ecotourism is misused, it has been documented that the local communities have not always been directly involved nor have they benefited from ecotourism projects; consequently, community development has also been undermined.

With this is mind, the present research aims at understanding the concept of ecotourism, as a means to community development, and finding the links between the two concepts. In addition, it seeks at exploring the ways in which ecotourism could in practice support community development, so as to find the correspondence between conceptualization and implementation. In order to reach these aims, the study intends at: a) looking to what extent ecotourism represent an opportunity for community development; b) identifying the opportunities and limitations of ecotourism to benefit the local communities; and, c) suggesting what is needed to overcome such limitations.

The research uses a qualitative research method that allows the author to get a deeper understanding of the concepts of ecotourism, community-based ecotourism and community development, and how the first two can contribute to the latter. The specific research design used is a comparative case-study, which aims at supporting the research in the intention of exploring the perceptions of the people regarding the concept of ecotourism and community development; and the ways in which ecotourism could support community development from the implementation perspective.

The two case-studies are composed by a community and a community-based tourism project developed by them. The first case-study is San Carlos Community and its mangrove and cultural tour, which is at its initial stage of implementation. The second case-study is Sabang Community and its mangrove paddle-boat tour, which has been operating since 2001. Both communities are located in rural areas of Puerto Princesa City, Palawan Island, in the

Philippines. Puerto Princesa has been branded as the ecotourism destination of the country. Tourism in Puerto Princesa is on top of the governmental agenda as a means to development besides agriculture. Both communities have great potential to develop ecotourism activities because of their natural beauty and biological sensitiveness, and because of the efforts they have put into conservation initiatives to protect the ecosystems (mangrove forests), which represent the basis for the livelihood of the people.

The first part of the research is dedicated to develop a conceptual framework -mainly composed by the definitions, principles, and elements of ecotourism and community development-, which then guides the selection of the case-studies, collection of data, and the discussion. The second part is devoted to conduct the case-studies in order to obtain empirical data from interviews and observations. The empirical data is used afterwards to compare both cases and learn from each other; as well as to compare it with the conceptual framework, in order to sustain the discussion and drive conclusions.

From the conceptual perspective, it is concluded that ecotourism and community development hold compatible aims. Some principles of ecotourism could lead to the achievement of some of the aims of community development. Various links are identified in this respect. For instance, ecotourism strongly supports the aim of community development of promoting a *people-centered approach* to development, by a) fostering direct participation and involvement of host communities in the planning, management and control of ecotourism activities; b) providing financial benefits and empowerment for local people; and, c) providing direct benefits for conservation of cultural resources.

It is suggested then, that ecotourism has a potential as a tool for community development from the theoretical point of view. However, when the concept of ecotourism is put into practice, several limitations are encountered, which undermine its aims and subsequently community development. Such limitations are, among others: misunderstanding of the concept and lack of proper implementation; weak representativeness and homogenization at the community level; lack of sense of community; lack of knowledge and skills; lack of proper participatory approaches; and lack of financial capital in the community.

From the analysis of the case-studies, it has been confirmed this lack of understanding of the concept and of proper implementation. It is shown that among the people interviewed during the field research, there are various perceptions of the concept of ecotourism. It was common to find that the social elements –local participation, involvement, and education– were not always linked to the concept of ecotourism, and of course that was also reflected at the implementation stage.

The suggestions provided at the end of the report are focused on the need of reinforcing the understanding of the concept of ecotourism, and on the ways in which ecotourism could be better implemented to contribute towards community development. This is based on the analysis of the community-based ecotourism initiatives proposed for the communities in Puerto Princesa, which are regarded as 'good initiatives' towards community development through ecotourism. The aforementioned could happen as long as: the local capacity is strengthened; policy is created to support the communities; members of the communities have built the necessary skills to become the main actors of such initiatives; and the support of local governments and other sectors is in place, especially regarding education, capacity building, and access to resources.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

It is widely recognized that tourism has a real potential for local and regional development. It can contribute to poverty alleviation by employment creation, social services provision and partnerships in the sustainable use of natural resources (de Beer and Marinda, 2005, p. 55). However, it is also acknowledged that its development has to be properly planned and managed; otherwise it can bring several negative consequences especially to the environment at the destination site and thus to the local people (Fossati and Panella, 2000, p. ix). Unfortunately, in many cases the tourism industry has responded to the benefit of few, and has not necessarily contributed to the development of the local communities (Scheyvens, 2002, p. 11). This is the case of, for example, cruise ships and all-inclusive resorts where the whole tourism-product is part of a pre-set package -including accommodation, food, and attractions- that does not allow the direct involvement of the locals.

During the last years, people's preferences towards alternative tourism destinations, as well as public awareness on environmental and social issues, brought up the segmentation of the tourism industry and various niche markets emerged. In that sense, **ecotourism** -*responsible travel to natural areas, which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people*- (The International Ecotourism Society [TIES], 1990) have experienced tremendous growth since the 1990's. It has become a hot topic and is considered by some as a sustainable alternative to improve the socio-economic conditions of local people (Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1996), as well as a tool for conservation of nature (Kiss, 2004).

In 2002 the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) declared *The International Year of Ecotourism.* That event constituted the cornerstone for bringing together various stakeholders to discuss ecotourism development and its importance within the tourism industry. This led to the World Ecotourism Summit (WES), which brought together more than 1,000 participants from 132 countries. WES' major outcome was the *Québec Declaration on Ecotourism,* which sets a preliminary agenda and recommendations for the development of ecotourism in the context of sustainable development (Québec Declaration on Ecotourism, 2002). After the WES in 2002, the first major international conference on ecotourism took place in 2007 – the Global Ecotourism Conference (GEC07) – in Oslo, Norway. That conference aimed at assessing the achievements and challenges of ecotourism post 2002, bringing together the ecotourism community, and building commitment to policies and actions to strengthen the contribution of ecotourism to sustainable development (Oslo Statement on Ecotourism, 2007).

Nowadays, the idea of ecotourism is used worldwide to attract a vast number of tourists especially to pristine natural areas. Beginning in the 1990s, ecotourism has been growing 20% - 34% per year (Mastny, 2001 cited in TIES, 2006). A recent report published by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Shell states that environmentally-friendly tourism is expanding at a rate of 20-30% annually, compared with 9% for tourism as a whole (IUCN, 2008).

As the ecotourism concept has been largely used, it has also become very controversial. The critics of the concept argue that ecotourism has been misused as a marketing strategy. It does

not contribute necessarily to sustainable development, unless: a) it is carefully *planned* and *managed;* b) provides *education* for tourists; c) tourism enterprises are *socially* and *environmentally responsible;* and most important, d) local communities are *involved in the management* of tourism activities (Cater, 1993, p. 90; WWF, 2002).

It has been stressed the importance of approaching ecotourism from the standpoint of local communities' direct participation and involvement (Scheyvens, 2002, p. 67). On that track, the term **community-based ecotourism** is conceived as a form of ecotourism where the local community has substantial control and involvement in the development and management of ecotourism activities, and benefits directly from its financial gains (WWF, 2002).

1.2 Problem Definition

In general, there is misunderstanding of the concept of ecotourism which undermines some of its aims when it is put in practice. The term ecotourism has been widely used and misused in different ways. In theory, one of the principles of ecotourism is bringing benefits to the local communities at the destination site (TIES, 1990). Benefiting the local communities, in turn, offers an opportunity for community development of the local populations (particularly in poor countries). But, in practice, as the concept of ecotourism is misused, it has been documented that the local communities have not always been directly involved and benefited from ecotourism projects (Cater, 1993, p. 86). Consequently, community development has also been undermined.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The overall aim of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of the concept of *ecotourism*, as a means to *community development*, so then the link between ecotourism and community development could be reconciled.

Based on the analysis of empirical examples, the specific aim of the research is to explore the ways in which *ecotourism* could support *community development*, by taking a look into the correspondence between 'conceptualization' and 'implementation'.

1.4 Research Question

The study seeks to answer these main research questions:

- To what extent does ecotourism represent an opportunity for community development?

- Which are the opportunities and limitations of ecotourism to ensure social, environmental and economic benefits to local communities?

- What is needed at the local level to develop ecotourism that benefits the community and, at the same time, ensures visitors' satisfaction?

- Who are other important stakeholders at the local level who could support the communities to develop ecotourism, and what is their role?

1.5 Scope and Limitations

The present study explores the link between ecotourism and its potential contributions to community development. Then, the *conceptual framework* of this research is limited to the concepts, principles and elements of ecotourism, community-based ecotourism and community development. The study of such concepts is performed with the intention of strengthening knowledge on the conceptualization of ecotourism and its practical implementation to ensure the successful achievement of its goals, in particular the development of the communities located within the areas where ecotourism is carried out.

Under those considerations, as an additional step *empirical data* is collected with the purpose of generating ideas on the implementation of ecotourism and its potential for supporting the development of poor rural communities. The context of the communities, for the present study, is limited to rural areas located within pristine natural spots in poor countries with high biodiversity and sensitive ecosystems, whose functions are important as a livelihood means for the members of the communities. A general characterization of the area is envisioned to be presented; but, to reach the objectives of the study, exclusive attention is given to the communities and the potential to develop ecotourism in the area.

The data gathered from empirical examples is compared with the conceptual framework during the discussion section. This is expected to provide an opportunity to gain an understanding of the perceptions of the concepts of ecotourism and community development among the people involved in the field research as compared to the concepts proposed by the literature. In addition, the analysis leads also to an understanding of the challenges and opportunities for a proper implementation of ecotourism as a means to community development.

As the research is limited to understanding and contributing to the concepts of *ecotourism* and *community development*; as well as the proper implementation of ecotourism from the perspective of 'communities direct participation' and 'local benefit', the study does not analyze the environmental implications of ecotourism from an ecosystem point of view. Besides, the analysis of the implementation of ecotourism is limited to the role of the communities as main players and beneficiaries of the tourism activities. Even though the role of other local stakeholders is also identified, the study does not look into the role of external stakeholders, like those located abroad or in other provinces of the country. In addition, the study does not analyze in depth other instruments as policy, certifications, and others.

Finally, the term 'community', in the context of the present study, denotes not only geographical location, but the group of people (within the geographical location) pursuing a common objective i.e. the development of ecotourism projects as a means of alternative livelihood. Even if some of the people involved in the development of the tourism projects do not necessarily belong to the same geographical area; they are still part of the 'community'.

1.6 Methodology

1.6.1 Research Strategy

Qualitative research has been used as the main basis for this study. This strategy is used to get a deeper understanding of the concepts of "ecotourism", "community-based ecotourism" and "community development", and how the first two can contribute to the later. The general approach suggested by Ragin to carry out qualitative research is followed. According to Ragin (1994), in order to begin a qualitative study it is necessary to have some sense of what

concepts might be used to guide the research. Those concepts are called sensitizing concepts and they get the research started (Ragin, 1994, p. 87). In that way, this research starts by revising an initial set of concepts (ecotourism, sustainability, community-based ecotourism, tourism value chain, and community development), which constitute the conceptual framework of the study (Section 2). Afterward, this research envisions clarifying or expanding those concepts based on the analysis of empirical material.

1.6.2 Research Design

The specific research design used in this study is a *comparative case-study*. It has been suggested that within research related to tourism, the use of empirical cases is essential, due to their flexibility, potential applicability to other situations, relevance in getting information, and offering opportunities to generate ideas which could lead to some generalizations (Beeton, 2005, p. 37-38).

This research follows the *literal replication* approach to multiple case study design (Figure 1-1) suggested by Yin (2003). This is a suitable approach to compare case-studies that offer anticipated similar findings to come up after the collection of empirical data (Yin, 2003, p. 47). *Literal replication,* as suggested by Yin (2003) involves: 1) developing theory; 2) selecting cases; 3) designing data collection protocols; 4) analyzing each case separately; 5) writing individual findings for each case-study; 6) comparing the findings; 7) drawing cross-case conclusions; and 8) providing recommendations – modifying theory and developing policy implications (Yin, 2003, p. 49-50). Figure 1-1 illustrates the scheme of literal replication used in this research. That scheme is based on Yin's model, but modified for the purposes of this study.
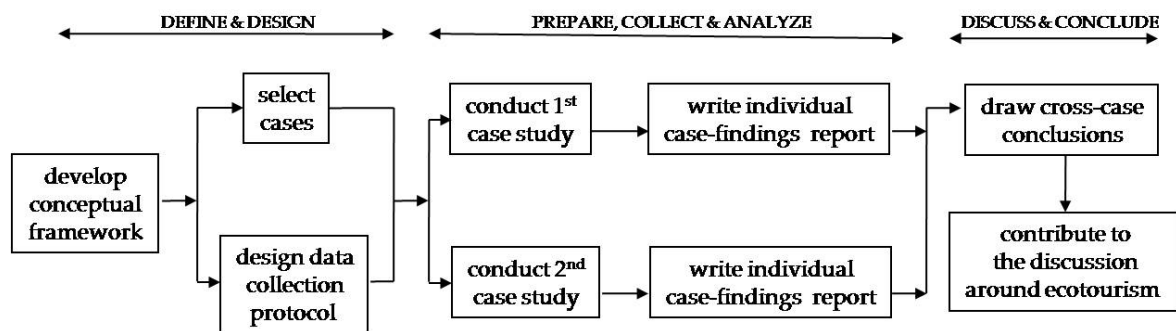
Figure 1-1 Research Design

Source: Based on the "literal replication" approach suggested by Yin (2003)

For this study, the first step (developing theory) is replaced by the use of the conceptual framework (section 2) which leads the research, guides the selection of case-studies, and the collection of empirical data. The data collected from each case study is analyzed separately, keeping a constant comparison with the conceptual framework and with each other to draw cross-case conclusions. This gives room for the discussion as well as for answering the research questions. Finally, the contribution to the discussion around ecotourism is provided when suggestions are given to clarify the concept (in relation to community development) and to ensure proper implementation at the local level.

Along the research *data triangulation* is used. Independent pieces of information are used to get a better understanding of something that is only partially acknowledged (Ragin, 1994, p. 100).

Through *data triangulation* all the data collected for the research is used to stimulate the discussion, draw conclusions, and provide recommendations.

1.6.3 Selection of Case-Studies

Based on the proposed conceptual framework and following the aim and scope of the present study, two case-studies have been selected. Each case-study is composed by a *community* and a *community-based tourism-product*. The communities are located in rural areas of Puerto Princesa City, Palawan Island, in the Philippines.

The first case-study is San Carlos community located in *sitio*[1] San Carlos in Barangay[2] Bacungan. The second case-study is Sabang community located in sitio Sabang in Barangay Cabayugan. The tourism-products are:

    a. Mangrove and Culture Tour in San Carlos community.

    b. Mangrove Paddle-Boat Tour in Sabang community.

The criteria used for the selection of the cases correspond to:

- The potential of the area to develop ecotourism activities, in terms of natural landscape and location.

- The significance of the nature and ecosystems in which the communities are located.

- The interest of the community to carry out such ecotourism projects.

- The special characteristics of each area, as the basis for an interesting comparative study.

- The fact that Puerto Princesa City has branded itself as the *ecotourism capital* of the Philippines.

The selected communities are both located in rural underdeveloped areas with great potential to develop ecotourism activities because of their natural beauty and biological sensitiveness. In addition, the selected communities have the predisposition to get involved in tourism projects. In the case of Sabang, community-based ecotourism activities have already started since 2001; while in San Carlos, there is a project in its initial stage. Furthermore, both communities are part of local development initiatives promoted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in order to increase the people's quality of life. Finally, the ecosystems that are part of the conservation initiatives undertaken by the communities are mangrove forests, which in both cases represent the basis for the livelihood of the people.

According to Yin (2003), when using comparative case-study design, the cases must be carefully selected so that they either predict similar results, or contrasting results, but for

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[1] The word 'sitio' is used to denote an area composed by a village and its surroundings (each Barangay is composed by several sitios).

[2] Barangay is the smallest political unit into which cities and municipalities in the Philippines are divided. It consists of less than 1,000 inhabitants residing within the territorial limit of a city or municipality and administered by a set of elective officials, headed by a barangay chairman (Republic of the Philippines, 2008).

predictable reasons (Yin, 2003, p. 47). In this research, the two cases selected suggest similar results although they have slightly different characteristics. The comparison between two slightly different cases gives more richness to the analysis.

1.6.4 Data collection

Two processes are carried out in order to collect data and address the research questions:

1) Primary (empirical) data collection: observations and interviews.

2) Secondary data collection: literature review and documentation.

Primary data collection:

Primary data has been collected during the field research performed in Puerto Princesa City in the month of July. The main objective of the field research has been to conduct interviews with various actors involved in one way or another with the development of tourism activities in Puerto Princesa. In that sense, interviews have been conducted with representatives of governmental institutions, NGOs, travel agencies, hotel owners, tourists, and the communities that constitute the case-studies for the research. Appendix I contains the full list of interviewees.

During the planning process, a set of general questions have been defined. Such questions have been modified depending on the position and organization of the person being interviewed. In that sense, semi-structured interviews have been performed during this phase of the research. The goal of the interviews has been to gain an understanding of the perceptions of people in Puerto Princesa about the concepts of ecotourism and community development; as well as the way ecotourism is being implemented in the area. The data obtained from this process is compared to the conceptual framework in order to drive conclusions and provide recommendations about the implications of the concept of ecotourism from a local development point of view, and its implementation to ensure community participation.

In order to collect additional primary data, direct observations have also been performed. Part of the fieldwork has included visits to the areas where the communities are developing the tourism-products.

The results of the data obtained from the interviews and observations have been analyzed and presented in section 4, and discussed in section 5.

Secondary data collection:

The study starts with the collection of secondary data, mainly from scientific journals, articles, and books. The literature review is focused -but not limited, to the following areas: ecotourism, community-based ecotourism, community development, sustainability, and tourism value chain. In addition, international instruments related to sustainable development, such as Agenda 21, have also been consulted. This data has been used to develop the conceptual framework which is the basis for carrying out the analysis, driving conclusions and providing recommendations. The secondary data has been also the basis for the selection of cases.

Online sources from governmental and non-governmental organizations have also been used. Those sources of information provided secondary data to produce a prior description of the current situation regarding tourism development in the case-study communities, and specifically the situation respect to community development. In addition to that, during the field research, documentation from governmental organizations has been collected, which constitutes an important source of secondary data regarding the local context of the communities. Such data is related, for instance, to population, geographical location, and quality of life indicators. This data has been used to characterize the case-study sites and the conditions of living of the population that constitute the communities.

1.7 Outline of the report

The report contains the following sections: 1) Introduction; 2) Conceptual framework; 3) Description of Case-Studies; 4) Findings; 5) Discussion; and, 6) Conclusions and Recommendations.

Section 1 presents a first contextualization to the topic by providing the general ideas about it. That section also provides other essentials, such as objectives of the study, research questions, and methodology. Section 2 provides a summary of the main features of the concepts of ecotourism and community development used for this research. Section 3 presents a brief summary of the elements and characteristics that constitutes the case studies used in this study. Later, section 4 presents a summary of the relevant findings of the analysis, in regards to the research questions defined for this study. Section 5 is the result of comparing the findings with the conceptual framework presented in section 2, plus the author's reflections about the topic being studied. Finally, section 6 envisions answering in short the research questions defined for this study and, in addition to that, providing recommendations based on what has been learned along the study.

2 Conceptual framework

2.1 Tourism Industry

Section 2.1., presents the dimension of the tourism industry and the relative position of ecotourism within it. Later, it mentions the efforts to make the tourism industry more sustainable. It also shows an attempt to summarize the various elements suggested by different authors as the constituent elements of ecotourism, as well as the critics attached to ecotourism. And finally, it presents a first link between ecotourism with sustainability and, further on, with community-related activities.

2.1.1 General considerations

Tourism is most often referred to as an industry, the **fastest growing industry** in the world. It offers the possibility to create more job opportunities, especially in the services sector, generates income for the local communities, and increases national income; thus it is viewed as a tool for development.

Contributing to the global economic development

With 846 million international tourist arrivals in 2006 (UNWTO, 2007, p. 2) and nearly 900 million in 2007 (UNWTO, 2008, p. 1), the tourism industry represents a significant pillar of many countries' economies (Figure 2-1). UNWTO (2007) estimates that worldwide receipts from international tourism reached USD 733 billion in 2006. According to TIES (2006), as of year 2006, the tourism industry was responsible for some 230 million jobs and over 10% of the gross domestic product worldwide. In addition, as of year 2004, it was estimated that in over 150 countries tourism was one of the top five export earners, and for 60 countries, tourism represented the number one export (TIES, 2006, p. 2).
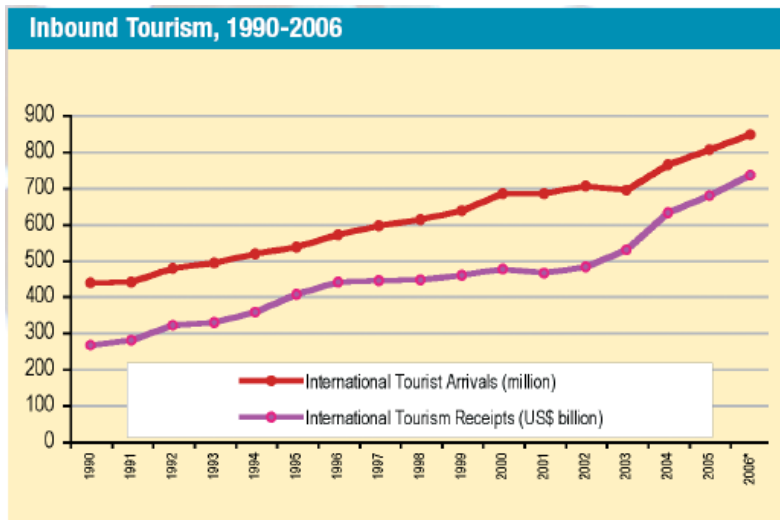

Figure 2-1 Global tourist arrivals and receipts gains in the period 1990-2006

Source: WTO, 2007, p. 2

Regarding regions of the world, Asia and the Pacific seem to show a remarkable progress in terms of economic gains from the tourism industry. As of year 2006, Asia and the Pacific

improved results from USD 18 billion to USD 153 billion in receipts generated by activities related to tourism. Additionally, in year 2002, Asia and the Pacific became the second most visited region in the world after Europe, surpassing the Americas. Looking at the growth tendency in Asia and the Pacific in terms of arrivals and receipts, and comparing it with that of the Americas, it seems like the former will overtake the latter in the coming years as well (UNWTO, 2007, p. 4).

Similarly, it has been also argued that ecotourism has experienced a significant growth in recent years, regardless of the difficulties to manage statistics for ecotourism because of the ambiguity of the term (see section 2.1.3 for an attempt to define ecotourism for the purposes of this research). As of year 2004, ecotourism/nature based tourism was growing globally three times faster than the tourism industry as a whole. An estimate for the same year suggested that nature tourism was growing at 10% - 12% per annum in the international market. In the same way, *experiential tourism* – which according to TIES encompasses ecotourism, nature, heritage, cultural, and soft adventure tourism, as well assub-sectors such as rural and community tourism – as of year 2001 was among the sectors expected to grow most quickly over the following two decades. The UNEP and Conservation International have indicated that most of tourism's expansion as of year 2005 was occurring in and around the world's remaining natural areas. Finally, tourism analysts in 2006 predicted a growth in eco-resorts and hotels, and a boom in nature tourism, a sector which was already growing at 20% a year in that year (TIES, 2006, p. 3).

A complex phenomenon

The tourism sector is very complex. It involves from large multinational corporations to small family-owned companies, plus a wide range of services. From the economic point of view, Fossati and Panella (2000) conceive tourists as *economic agents* that operate in various markets in the destination country; as such, many industries contribute to the production of services demanded by tourists, the *tourism-product*. "Tourism is the aggregate of all businesses that directly provide goods or services to facilitate business, pleasure, and leisure activities away from the home environment" (Smith, 1988 quoted in van Wijk, 2007). Sectors such as transportation, accommodation, catering, tour operators and travel agencies are directly linked with the production of the services that make the tourism-product.

In the tourism industry it is very important to ensure customer satisfaction. However, since the tourism demand is met by the joint effort of various players it is difficult to coordinate everybody's work and ensure quality services that meet everyone's satisfaction. Some models to visualize and evaluate the whole tourism-product have been proposed on the basis of the value chain approach. The *tourism value chain* consists of a group of activities from a pre-visiting image and marketing to evaluation of customer satisfaction. It reflects the whole production process of the tourism-product. This research uses a tourism value chain model (Figure 2-2) shaped on the basis of the suggested models by Gollub et al. (2004, p. 29), and Yilmaz et al. (2006, p. 343). This model aims to provide a general view of the services and actors involved in the tourism industry[3].

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[3] The model of tourism value chain proposed by Gollub et al. (2004, p. 29), includes goods (e.g. equipment, construction materials, travel goods, crafts, etc) and services. But for the purposes of the present study, only the services have been taken into account, since the focus is to understand who and how benefit from providing such services.
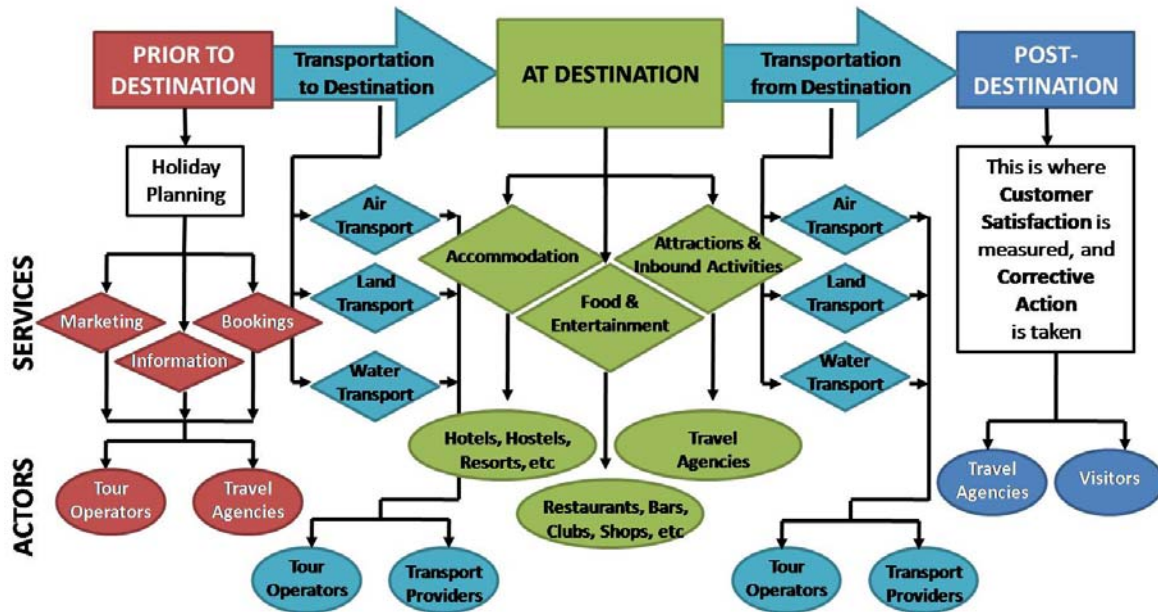
Figure 2-2 Tourism-services value chain

Source: Based on Gollub et al., 2004, p. 29; and Yilmaz et al., 2006, p. 343

According to Figure 2-2, there are three main stages of the tourism value chain:

At the first stage – **prior to destination** (red in figure 2-2), the main services provided are: *marketing*, which promotes and sells the destination; *information* about the destination and requirements for the trip; and *bookings*, which involve the actual purchasing of the tourism-product. The tourism-product can be a pre-determined travel package arranged by tour operators and sold by travel agencies; or separate services bought individually by the traveler. The tour operators (arranging the tourism-product) and travel agents (selling the tourism-product) operate at this stage. Nowadays, with the increasing use of internet, many travelers prefer to put together the tourism-product themselves, thus decreasing the intervention of travel agents.

At the **destination** stage (green in figure 2-2), the tourism-product is provided. The destination can be a city, a natural or cultural site, a theme park, a historical attraction, an event, etc. The main services provided are: accommodation, food and attractions/activities. This is where the lodging and catering sectors participate, as well as travel agents in case of pre-arranged attractions and activities.

The **post-destination** stage (dark blue in figure 2-2) is where the customer satisfaction is measured, with the intervention of the providers of the service and visitors. A common way to receive direct feedback from the visitors is through a customer satisfaction survey about the service and their experience, for instance. The purpose of this stage, as highlighted by Yilmaz et al. (2006, p. 343), is to take the necessary corrective action to ensure that the tourism value chain is managed in a continuous manner.

Finally, the **transportation** to and from the destination (light blue in figure 2-2) is an important part of the value chain. Depending on the location and the distance of the travel, transportation may be the major tourist expenditure, for instance flights from one continent to another, or cruise ships.

When it comes to the tourism industry and its contribution to the economy of the host country, a major problem occurs throughout the value chain. This relates to the *economic leakage* issue. Tourism economic leakages generally are defined as the "amounts subtracted from tourist expenditures for taxes, repatriated profits, and wages paid outside the region, and for imported goods and services" (Gollub et al., 2004, p. 24). Leakages can occur in different ways and at various stages of the value chain. For instance, it can take place with the intervention of foreign companies, such as tour operators and travel agencies, which organize the tourism package and sell it outside the destination, thus retaining the money abroad. Also leakages can occur through the import of services and goods to the destination, which usually happens when the demand of the services is bigger than the local capacity to supply.

2.1.2 Towards a more sustainable tourism industry

Although the tourism industry is a great contributor to the global economy, its negative impacts have been widely acknowledged. From a social point of view, for instance, prostitution has become a big issue in tourism destinations, especially in the developing countries. McCool and Moisey (2001) state that tourism is no longer a benign economic development tool. In the same way, they sustain that the environmental issues associated with tourism development are not significantly different from other methods of development, such as forestry, agriculture and manufacturing. From the environmental side, the impacts of tourism are mostly linked to the destruction of ecosystems, overuse of finite resources, and pollution. As a response to the concerns regarding the negatives effects of tourism, sustainable development principles began to be applied to the tourism industry since the 1970's (Scheyvens, 2002, p. 53).

Sustainable tourism entails that the natural, historical and cultural resources for tourism are conserved for continuous use of future generations. It has been defined as:

> "Tourism that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future" (UNWTO, 1996, p. 30).

Based on the concept and pillars of sustainable development, the UNWTO (2004) identifies three main principles of sustainable tourism:

1) Make optimal use of environmental resources - maintaining essential ecological processes and conserving natural heritage and biodiversity.

2) Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities - conserving their cultural heritage and traditional values, and contributing to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.

3) Ensure viable, long-term economic operations - providing socio-economic benefits, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

UNWTO (2004) acknowledges that these are applicable to all forms of tourism, including conventional or mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments, such as ecotourism. In that sense, it is claimed that "sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development", and that "a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability" (UNWTO, 2004). Finally, sustainable tourism products are considered as products which operate in harmony with nature, people and cultures, so that they become beneficiaries, not victims, of tourism development (UNWTO, 1996, p. 30).

Various efforts have been taken by the tourism industry, governments, non-governmental organizations, international financial institutions, and UN programs towards making the tourism industry greener, more responsible, more sustainable, or simply 'better'. These initiatives include the creation of regulations, forums, national and international ecotourism societies, codes of conduct, best practices, awards, ecolabels, standards, certifications, sustainability indicators, and so on. In the decade between the Earth Summit in 1992 and the International Year of Ecotourism in 2002, for example, more than 60 environmental tourism certification programs were developed (ECOTRANS cited in Center of Ecotourism and Sustainable Development [CESD]), 2007). Figure 2-3 shows that almost 80% of the tourism certification programs as of year 2001 were European certifications, and almost 70% of the certifications were focused on the accommodation sector. By year 2007, more than 80 voluntary tourism certification programs existed or were under development (CESD, 2007), from which the majority are European programs.
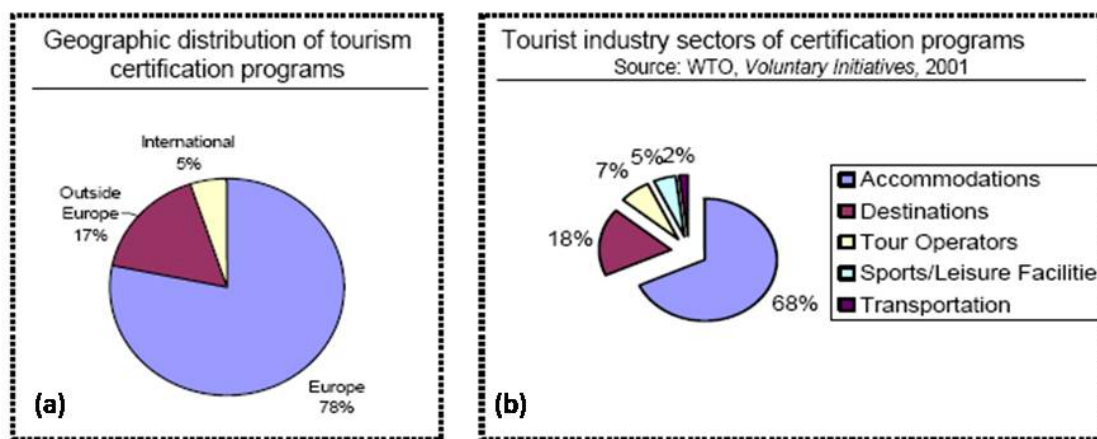
Figure 2-3 (a) Geographic distribution of tourism certifications programs. (b) Tourist industry sectors of certification programs.

Source: UNWTO, Voluntary Initiatives 2001, cited in CESD, 2007

The latest global initiative to foster a common understanding of sustainable tourism is the *Sustainable Tourism Criteria.* The initiative is currently being developed by the so called Global Partnership for Sustainable Tourism Criteria (STC Partnership) - a coalition of 25 organizations working together towards understanding sustainable tourism practices and adopting universal sustainable tourism principles (the Sustainable Tourism Criteria will be launched in October 2008 at the World Conservation Congress in Barcelona). This set of internationally recognized baseline criteria intends to: a) serve as a guideline for businesses to become more sustainable; b) for consumers and media to identify sustainable tourism programs; and c) for education. In addition, it aims at supporting certifications and other voluntary programs to ensure that their standards meet a broadly-accepted baseline (STC Partnership, 2008).

2.1.3 Ecotourism

"Ecotourism is generally believed to be a desired form of sustainable tourism"
(McCool and Moisey, 2001)

Definition and Principles

Literature does not present a concise definition of the term ecotourism. It is often driven the attention to the fact that various ways to conceptualize the term have been used, and thus there is no consensus on its definition. As stated by Scheyvens (2002, p. 69), a broad definition of ecotourism involves all types of tourism that focuses on appreciation of nature. However, for some, mere enjoyment of nature has been conceptualized as nature-based tourism[4] (Rainforest Alliance, 2004), and that is not enough for more restrictive definitions of ecotourism. Buckley (1994, p. 661-664) for instance, proposes an ecotourism framework that includes nature-based products and markets, support to conservation, sustainable management to minimize impacts, and environmental attitudes and education of individual people.

In general, ecotourism is considered as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people" (TIES, 1990). TIES was launched as the world's first ecotourism association in 1990 and since then the definition of ecotourism provided by this organization is the most commonly used worldwide.

For TIES (1990), tourists and hosts of ecotourism activities should pursue the following principles:

- Minimize impact.

- Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect.

- Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts.

- Provide direct financial benefits for conservation.

- Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people.

- Raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climate.

Different authors also often refer to Héctor Ceballos-Lascuráin, who is credited for coining the term in 1983 (Scheyvens, 2002, p. 71; Honey, 2002, p. 2). Ceballos-Lascuráin (1993a, cited in Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1996, p. 20) presents a more detailed definition of ecotourism:

> Ecotourism is "environmentally responsible, enlightening travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas in order to enjoy, study and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features - both past and present), that promotes conservation, has low visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations".

On the same track, Honey (2002, p. 1) highlights that the real ecotourism is -if properly understood and implemented, a set of principles and practices which can transform the way

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[4] Nature-based tourism is defined as *"travel to unspoiled places to experience and enjoy nature"* (Rainforest Alliance, 2004).

people travel. Honey (1999, p. 24) expanded the definition of ecotourism to include not only financial benefits for conservation efforts and local people, but also support for humans rights and democratic movements.

Criticism to Ecotourism

As there are many supporters to the idea of ecotourism, there are also many critics. The first strong critic is done to the idea that ecotourism is often conceived as the panacea to the negative impacts of conventional tourism and as such leads to sustainable development (WWF, 2002; Cater, 1993, p. 85). This idea has been challenged by questioning if the current ecotourism development is always a responsible alternative. The WWF (2002) brings forward that building roads, car parks, and accommodation in national parks is just one example of doubtful ecotourism development.

Table 2-1 Criticism to ecotourism

Requirements for sustainable tourism development	Arguments against ecotourism as a true sustainable form of tourism
Tourism development should meet the needs of the host population in terms of improved living standards both in the short and long term.	Ideally, in order to satisfy the needs of the host population, there should be direct local participation in ecotourism activities. However, the powerful *intervention of international organizations* (commonly from developed countries), as well as the *high degree of foreign investment*, do not only limit local involvement; but also originate economic leakages, increases on land prices, and high costs that the locals cannot afford to participate. In addition, true wilderness tourists do not bring good economic benefits to the people, since there are not many expenses while staying in the nature.
Tourism development should satisfy the demands of a growing number of tourists and continue to attract them in order to meet the first aim.	Ecotourism is *increasing at a rapid rate* and it becomes challenging to manage such rate of growth in order to ensure tourists satisfaction. It is also common that ecotourism *concentrates in prime sites*, which may result in an undesirable level of degradation. Moreover, *ecotourists behavior is not always responsible* and varies from person to person, thus it is risky to assume that all ecotourists are environmentally aware.
Tourism development should safeguard the natural environment in order to achieve both of the preceding aims.	Ecotourism is in danger of becoming self destructive and destroys the natural resources on which it is based. The first argument is that it is precisely the most remote, unspoiled, and underdeveloped areas that ecotourists seek, which are most *vulnerable for environmental degradation*. Also, it is not possible to carry out ecotourism activities without some degree of environmental impact. Furthermore, increasing number of ecotourists represent *higher demands of infrastructure*. Finally, host destinations are *not always able to afford the costs of environmental management*, such as protection measures, prevention, and restoration.

Source: Cater, 1993, p. 86-89

Cater (1993, p. 90), argues that ecotourism is not significantly different from conventional tourism unless: a) it is carefully planned and managed; b) tourists are well informed; c) tourism enterprises are socially and environmentally responsible; and most important, d) local communities are involved in the management of tourism activities and benefited directly from the utilization of resources. Table 2-1 above summarizes the arguments given by Cater (1993) to argue that ecotourism does not always meet the requirements of sustainable tourism development.

Finally, it is also important to highlight that the vague definition of ecotourism has resulted in misinterpretations and suspicious practices. Honey (2002, p. 6) presents two trends of ecotourism: "ecotourism lite" which refers to the use of superficial practices that are usually marketed as important innovations; and "green washing" which refers to the use of green words and fake marketing strategies to pretend to be environmentally friendly.

Ecotourism development raises international interest

As the market of ecotourism was growing rapidly, and its potential as a contributor to development was recognized, in 2002 -The International Year of Ecotourism- the UNWTO and UNEP organized the WES, which took place in Québec. The WES brought together more than 1000 participants from 132 countries to discuss about ecotourism development within the framework of sustainable development. Its major outcome was the *Québec Declaration on Ecotourism,* which sets the preliminary agenda and recommendations for the development of ecotourism in the context of sustainable development.

The Québec Declaration on Ecotourism (2002) recognizes that ecotourism embraces, besides the principles of sustainable tourism, the following specific principles:

1. "Contributes actively to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage,

2. Includes local and indigenous communities in its planning, development and operation, and contributes to their well-being,

3. Interprets the natural and cultural heritage of the destination to visitors,

4. Lends itself better to independent travelers, as well as to organized tours for small size groups".

Regarding local and indigenous communities participation, the Declaration stresses the need for '*participative planning mechanisms*' to allow them to define and regulate the use of their areas for tourism development, in order to achieve equitable benefits and minimize negative impacts (Québec Declaration on Ecotourism, 2002).

In practice, the Québec Declaration on Ecotourism offers a set of recommendations which are yet very general. Those recommendations provided in the Québec Declaration on Ecotourism to governments, non-governmental organizations, private sector, inter-governmental organizations, and local communities focused mostly to the need of developing national, regional and local ecotourism policies and strategies consistent with the goals of sustainable development.

As mentioned earlier, after the WES in 2002, the first major international conference on ecotourism took place in 2007 –the GEC07– in Oslo, Norway. The GEC07 was organized by TIES, Ecotourism Norway, and the UNEP, with the objective of: a) assessing the achievements and challenges of ecotourism since 2002; b) bringing together the ecotourism community; and c) building commitment to policies and actions to strengthen the contribution of ecotourism to sustainable development (Oslo Statement on Ecotourism, 2007).

Based on the results of the GEC07, TIES developed a set of recommendations (reaffirming the Québec Declaration) presented in the Oslo Statement of Ecotourism. This Statement recognizes that many challenges remain since 2002 regarding ecotourism development. These

challenges are, among others: a) the need for best practice management; b) working against the abuse and misuse of the concept – green washing within the tourism industry; c) integration of ecotourism strategies into environmental policies; d) lack of economic stability of ecotourism enterprises and access to markets; e) stronger strategies to decrease ecotourism's carbon footprint; f) support and recognition to national and regional ecotourism associations; and, g) more socially equitable approaches.

The set of recommendations provided by the Oslo Statement of Ecotourism lies within four areas: local sustainable development, conservation, communication and education, and critical issues in ecotourism. Regarding *local sustainable development*, the Statement stresses the importance of recognizing and supporting local and indigenous communities as equal stakeholders and business leaders in the development of sustainable enterprises. In this respect, it is recommended to: a) develop strategies for community empowerment and involvement, b) adopt policies to ensure benefits for the poor, c) support other sustainable practices, d) integrate the principles of fair trade into ecotourism definition, and e) promote sustainable partnerships to address the role of tourism as a development tool (Oslo Statement on Ecotourism, 2007).

Nevertheless, ecotourism still represents an opportunity for providing economic benefits to local communities. Some figures shown by TIES (2006, p. 3) suggest a different impact on the local economies of the destination sites in relation to ecoturism compared with mass tourism. An estimation suggests that in the Caribbean's Dominica, "stay over" tourists using small nature-based lodges usually spend 18 times more than cruise passengers while visiting the island. Similarly, in Indonesia's Komodo National Park, independent travelers usually spend nearly USD 100 locally per visit; whereas package tourists spend only half of it. In addition, as of year 2004, it was estimated that 80% of money for all-inclusive package tours goes to airlines, hotels, and other international companies. Meanwhile, eco-lodges hire and purchase local products and services, thus putting sometimes as much as 95% of money into the local economy. Finally, it was estimated that the daily expenditure of cultural tourists (over € 70/USD 90) was higher than the expenditure of visitors on a touring holiday (€ 52/USD 67), beach holiday (€ 48/USD 62), and city break (€ 42/USD 54) as of year 2004.

2.1.4 Community-Based Ecotourism

The importance of community participation and empowerment has been stressed as a key element of ecotourism. On the other hand, ecotourism has been seen by its supporters as an opportunity for communities to improve their social, economical and environmental conditions. However, in practice such participation has occurred at different levels, especially considering the high intervention of international companies and tour operators in ecotourism development, as highlighted by Cater (1993).

Mowforth and Munt (1998, p. 103), state that the current debate is concerned on the way how the communities should participate, and on defining if that participation involves *control* over tourism activities and financial gains. Participation can vary from manipulative to self-mobilization; that is passive versus active participation (Pretty, 1995 cited in Scheyvens, 2002). According to the same source, when there is passive participation of communities in tourism activities, the benefits they receive are indirect and are usually limited to job creation. On the other hand, active participation means that the communities are involved in the planning and management of tourism activities and get involved in decision making processes to safeguard their interests and their resources.

The term *community-based ecotourism* (CBET) emphasizes on the social dimension of ecotourism. According to WWF (2001, p. 2) this is a "form of ecotourism where the local community has substantial control over, and involvement in, its development and management, and a major proportion of the benefits remain within the community".

CBET focuses on the involvement of the host community in planning and implementing tourism activities to enhance their livelihood; while at the same time, protect their cultural and natural resources, thus reaching sustainable development (Hall, 1996 cited in Blackstock, 2005, p. 39; Yaman and Mohd, 2004, p. 584).

Nevertheless, some constraints to active community participation in tourism planning have been acknowledged. Richards and Hall (2000, p. 28) present an analytical framework of issues that affect community participation. The framework identifies three sets of issues: a) scope of participation by the community, meaning representativeness and number of participants from relevant stakeholders; b) intensity of participation by the community which is more intense if it involves direct, open and polite dialogue, and mutual learning; and, c) degree of consensus among participants and how do they come across inequalities. Furthermore, Scheyvens (2002, p. 57) based on Koch (1997), mentions additional issues, summarized as follows:

- Lack the ownership over land and natural resources at the community level.

- Lack of knowledge and skills in the community to develop tourism.

- Lack of financial capital in the community to develop infrastructure.

- Lack of homogenization in the community, which may create conflict.

CBET has also become popular as a tool for biodiversity conservation, not only due to the economic benefit it may bring to the local people, but also because it improves local attitudes and behavior towards conservation and natural resources. Kiss (2004, p. 232) states that under the context of conservation theory, CBET is a "form of community-based natural resource management (CBNRM), a popular choice of activities in an enterprise-based strategy for biodiversity conservation, and a common element in integrated conservation and development projects (ICDP)". CEBT seeks to reduce local threats to biodiversity under the argument that natural environments are the target destination for ecotourists, and as such must be kept undestroyed.

Finally, it is important to mention other complimentary requirements of a successful CBET. Those requirements entail, besides local participation, governmental support, fair sharing of benefits among the community members, informed and aware participants, sustainable use of local resources, and strengthening of local institutions (Yaman, 2004, p. 585-587). If such elements do not coexist, there is a risk to undermine the purpose of ecotourism and CBET, and generate same or worst social and environmental impacts than conventional tourism.

2.2 Community Development

It has been mentioned that ecotourism may constitute a potential tool for community development. Therefore, it is important to have an understanding of what does community development involve. This section describes the different perceptions and elements of community development despite the scarce literature available about the topic.

2.2.1 Definition

The origin of the word *community* comes from the Latin *communitas* equivalent to *communis* which means "common, public, general, shared by all or many" (Harper, 2001). This term is used from various perspectives and within different fields. In biology for instance, community means "a naturally occurring assemblage of plant and animal species living within a defined area or habitat" (Martin and Hine, 2008).

Within the field of social sciences many definitions can be found and all agree that the term community relates to a group of people that share a common interest. Traditionally, it was defined as a group of individuals living in a common geographic area. But the definition has been extended to include other common characteristics apart from the location, such as the sense of identity, ethnicity, lifestyles, social relations, and occupation (Scott and Marshall, 2005). According to Wilkinson (1991, cited in Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences [IFAS], 2004), community is important because it provides individual and social welfare to its members by establishing channels of communication and creating opportunities to satisfy their needs. In this sense, it is important to enhance the relationships among members of a community in order to bring them together towards the accomplishment of their common goal, which is essential to *community development*. Community development can be seen as a dynamic process that aims to improve local conditions. (Wilkinson, 1991; Luloff and Bridger, 2003 cited in IFAS, 2004).

Generally, it is possible to say that one of the most important goals of community development is to improve the quality of life of the members of the community (Barnard and Van Der Merwe, 1990). However, such statement leaves open the notion of "quality of life". What does it mean in different contexts and living conditions? What should community development embrace in order to achieve quality of life? It seems like there is no consensus on what should community development comprise; yet, as pointed out by Connie O'Brien (2005, p. 118) community development lacks a solid definition. For some, it is a synonymous of economic development; while for others it serves to enhance the social aspects of the community.

2.2.2 The link to sustainability

The traditional neoclassical approach of development is associated with economic growth which focuses on the expansion of national incomes and levels of consumption. Nevertheless, another vision of development theory has integrated the social and environmental dimensions of development. The social dimension stresses the importance of achieving human well-being beyond just economic development and is frequently reflected in the *human development paradigm* (Harris, Wise, Gallagher, and Goodwin, 2001, p. xxvii). The environmental dimension was strongly supported by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), which introduced the most commonly known concept of *sustainable development* in 1987 in the Brundtland report.

Two approaches are the main contributors for the creation of what is often understood as *human development*. First, the notion of *human development* arose in the 1980's mainly from the contributions of Mahbub ul Haq and Paul Streeten who supported a "*basic needs*" approach advocating for the necessity to cover the basic needs of the people, such as education, nutrition, and health care to reach development. And second, the important contribution of Amartya Sen, who promoted an "*outcomes based*" approach supporting the idea of shifting the focus of development from the "increase in per capita income" to the improvement of quality of life by enhancing the capacities of people to manage effectively the resources (Harris, et al., 2001, p. 48-49).

From Sen's approach, human development has been defined as a "process of **enlarging people's choices and enhancing human capabilities and freedoms**, enabling them to: live a long and healthy life, have access to knowledge and a decent standard of living, and participate in the life of their community and decisions affecting their lives" (UNDP, 2008a). The main distinction between human development approach and the traditional economic growth approach is that the later focuses only in the increase of income, while the former conceives economic growth as a means to reach human well-being and emphasizes on enhancing other factors of development, such as the social, cultural and political factors. In addition, human development places people in the center of development and fosters an equitable access to opportunities by strengthening people's capabilities (Mahbub ul Haq, 1995 cited in Harris, et al., 2001, p. 58-61). Table 2-2 shows the most important components of human development.

Table 2-2 Components of Human Development Paradigm

Component	Definition
Equity	Refers to creating access to the same political, social and economic opportunities throughout the society. Supports an even distribution of income and assets among all.
Social progress	Refers to providing better access to education, nutrition and health services.
Productivity	Relates to the importance of economic growth as a means to human development. Requires investment in physical and human capital to raise the productivity of people through training and education. Human development supports growth and productivity as long as it benefits directly the marginalized groups.
Participation & Empowerment	It incorporates social, political and cultural rights. Includes democracy, freedom to exercise people's choices, involvement of all members of the society in decision making that affects their lives, and decentralization of power.
Sustainability	Brings in the notion of time and refers to the need of ensuring that human opportunities last over generations in ecological, economic and social terms.
Security	Relates to the guarantee of keeping humans away from threats such as hunger, conflict, etc.

Source: Mahbub ul Haq, 1995 cited in Harris, et al., 2001, p. 59-60; UNDP, 2008a

In the same line, the concept of *sustainable development* underlines the importance to satisfy human needs, but emphasizes on the long term preservation of the natural resources, so that such needs are satisfied indefinitely by future generations. Sustainable development then "ensures meeting the needs of present generations, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (UN, 1987, p. 24). A more detailed definition of sustainable development suggests that it involves three key interrelated components: *social*, *economic* and *environmental* (see Table 2-3).

Table 2-3 Components of Sustainable Development

Component	Definition
Social Progress	Includes equitable sharing of the benefits and burdens of resource use.
Environmental component	Is based upon recognition that sustainable development cannot be achieved if (a) natural resources and energy are utilized faster than the earth can replenish them, or (b) waste and pollution are produced faster than the earth can accommodate them.
Economic development	Calls for growth, employment and better living standards for all.

Source: UNITAR, 2005-07, p. 2

In this context, *Agenda 21*, launched at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED - Earth Summit) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 is a comprehensive plan of action towards sustainable development. Agenda 21 stresses the need to empower communities, enhance education and participation, strengthen the role of major groups, and create public awareness to reach an equitable and sustainable form of development. For instance, in Chapter 3 "Combating Poverty", recalls the importance of supporting a community-driven approach to sustainability by the empowerment and participation of the community in decision-making and in the management of natural resources to enhance their productive capacity, as well as creating access to the resources needed to overcome poverty (UN Division for Sustainable Development [UNDSD], 2004a).

Moreover, regarding the environmental component of sustainable development, Agenda 21 sets strategies and objectives of proper management and conservation of the environment. It promotes the protection of the atmosphere, oceans, seas and bodies of fresh water; the conservation of the biological diversity; the integrated planning and management of land, ecosystems and biotechnology; the environmentally sound management of wastes; and sustainable practices of agriculture (UNDSD, 2004b).

In addition, Agenda 21 (chapter 30) stresses the importance of strengthening the role of businesses and industry to achieve social and economic development. Private businesses and industry provide opportunities for trading, employment and livelihood, as well as for social and professional growth (UNDSD, 2004c). It is important, though, that businesses recognize environmental matters and social responsibility as key priorities within corporate strategies towards sustainability. Industry can contribute to the mitigation of impacts on human health and environment "through more efficient production processes, preventive strategies, cleaner production technologies and procedures throughout the product life cycle…" (UNDSD, 2004c). Such strategies will contribute not only to the minimization of natural resources use and generation of wastes, but also to the long term economic benefit of the business.

After a short review of the human development approach and sustainable development, to finalize this section, it is important to emphasize that the concept of community development entails also principles aiming at strengthening the capacity of people to take part in decisions that affect their development. In that sense, O'Brien (2003 cited in O'Brien, 2005, p. 119) and Swanepoel et al. (2000 cited in de Beer et al., 2005, p. 53) affirm that community development:

- promotes a *people-centered* approach to development, where the members of the community are the heart of development actions;

- uses *external support as a tool* of development activities, but does not rely on it;

- allows *learning* to take place and assumes the *balance* between *rights* and *responsibilities*;

- enhances *local leadership* and *participatory approaches*;

- allows *small scale projects* to take place;

- enables members of the community to *work together* to *meet basic human needs*; and,

- involves *conflict resolution* and *poverty mitigation strategies* to facilitate development.

Community development is an approach that aims to ensure long lasting results. It supports communities to become actors of their own development, thus combating dependency on governmental and non-governmental agencies to take actions (de Beer et al., 2005, p. 54).

2.2.3 Community-based conservation

Within the framework of sustainable development, communities are also vital for environmental conservation. It is clear that functioning and healthy ecosystems are essential for life since they provide the services that present and future generations depend on to survive. The challenge is to use natural resources wisely to combat poverty avoiding their depletion and consequent extinction. Without community involvement and awareness, conservation of the environment will become tougher, considering that it requires a planned and sustained management of the natural resources of which governments and people are an essential part of.

During the last two decades, community-based conservation has been promoted as an important component of conservation policy (Hsing-Sheng, 2007, p. 1186). This approach supports a "win–win" strategy by which the goals of biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development are integrated, playing a significant role in strengthening local sustainable livelihoods (Hsing-Sheng, 2007, p. 1186). Development and conservation need to be complementary to reach sustainability. In this context, conservation initiatives aiming at economic development alone will not ensure interest and participation from the people; while development without a focus on conservation will not ensure the right of future generations to satisfy their needs.

3 Description of Case-Studies

Before the case-studies are described, it is important for the reader to learn about the geographical and social context of the country and specifically of Palawan Island and Puerto Princesa city. This section aims to provide general information about the Philippines and Palawan; alongside more detailed information about the position of the tourism industry in Puerto Princesa City. It finally presents the main features of the case-studies.

3.1 Setting

3.1.1 Geography

The Country

The Philippines is an archipelago of 7,107 islands with an area of 299,764 Km² (Figure 3-1). The country is divided into three geographical areas: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. It has 17 regions, 81 provinces, 136 cities, 1,494 municipalities, and 41,995 barangays. Provinces are composed of cities and municipalities. Within cities, there could be more than one municipality. Municipalities, in turn, are composed of barangays; and finally, barangays are composed of villages (Republic of The Philippines, 2008).

Palawan Island

Palawan is an island province located in south-western Philippines. Eventhough the province is simultaneously formed by 1,780 islands, there is one main island, thus Palawan is commonly referred as to an "island province". Palawan is 650 Km long from tip to tip (mainland is 450 Km long). The province is subdivided into 1 city (Puerto Princesa), 23 municipalities and 432 barangays (Buñi, 2008, personal interview), and has a total population of 755,412 inhabitants (Province of Palawan, 2008). Palawan holds spots of prominent natural beauty and exotic flora and fauna. The island province is surrounded by rainforest, mountains, pristine beaches, a coral shelf, and exceptional dive sites. In 1990 it was designated as *Biosphere Reserve* by the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Man and Biosphere Programme (UNESCO, 2008a). In addition, the province has two UNESCO World Natural Heritage Sites: the Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park, declared in 1999, and the pristine Tubbataha Reef National Marine Park, in the Sulu Sea declared in 1993 (UNESCO, 2008b).

Figure 3-1 Map of the Philippines

Source: www.wikipedia.com

The City of Puerto Princesa

Palawan's capital city is Puerto Princesa, which lies in the middle of the long island province. It is divided up in 66 barangays, 35 urban barangays (which compose the city proper located towards the eastern side of the island – see Figure 3-3 bellow), and 31 rural barangays (City Tourism Office of Puerto Princesa, 2008a), most of which are settlements scattered in underdeveloped land. The Subterranean River National Park mentioned above is located in one of the rural barangays called Cabayugan.

3.1.2 The people

The total population of the country according to the 2000 Census of Population and Housing was 76,498,735 inhabitants. Manila, the capital city, located in the Luzon Island had a population of 1,580,000 inhabitants as of year 2000 (National Statistics Office, 2005), whereas Metro Manila (the extended metropolitan area) is home to over 14 million people as of 2008 (Manila City Government, 2008). The country has two official languages: Tagalog and English. The main industries of the Philippines are petroleum refining, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, electronics assembly, furniture, garments, footwear, food processing and fishing. Agriculture has traditionally been the main employer of the working population. But the services sector is becoming increasingly important. Regarding the former, products include: rice, corn, sugarcane, bananas, coconuts, mangoes, pineapples, eggs, pork and beef. (World Info Zone, 2008). Regarding the latter, due to increase of investment, the tourism industry has enlarged its role in the economy. In 2007, foreign arrivals reached 3.09 million and tourist expenditure reached USD 4.88 billion, surpassing the USD 3.78 billion target (Department of Tourism [DOT], 2007, p. 1).

The City of Puerto Princesa had a population of 161,912 inhabitants as of May 2000. A third of the population resides in the city proper, an urbanized settlement on the shores of Puerto Princesa Bay (City Tourism Office of Puerto Princesa, 2008b). Most of the population is engaged in fishing and agriculture.

3.1.3 Tourism in Puerto Princesa, Palawan

In Puerto Princesa city, as in many other parts of the world, tourism has been identified as an important industry for the development of the region. The city has been branded as an ecotourism destination and is called by different names that suggest this, such as the "*ecotourism capital of the Philippines*", and "*a city in the forest*". Puerto Princesa's main tourism attractions are: Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park, Honda Bay, diving sites, and several beaches. The tourism industry has been increasing since 2004 after it suffered a turn down in 2001 (Galido, 2008, personal interview).

As of year 2006, Puerto Princesa had a total of 147,806 tourist arrivals, including local and foreign tourists (City Tourism Office of Puerto Princesa, 2008c). Figure 3-2 illustrates the increase of tourist arrivals in the city of Puerto Princesa in the period 2003 – 2006, confirming Galido's (2008) asseverations.

To date, Puerto Princesa is only capable of accommodating over a thousand guests. It counts with approximately 1,000 hotel rooms of all kinds. The city official, Mayor Edward Hagedorn is positive in enhancing Puerto Princesa's tourism industry, but the city still lacks infrastructure facilities and the accommodation capacity is insufficient. It is the Mayor's goal then to support the tourism development and double the number of hotel rooms in three

years. His strategy is to attract big investors into the city's tourism to increase the accommodation capacity and infrastructure (City Tourism Office of Puerto Princesa, 2008d).
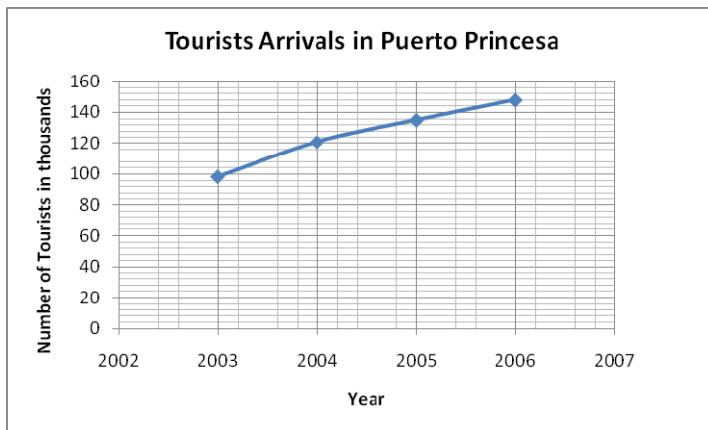
Figure 3-2 Total tourist arrivals in Puerto Princesa - domestic and international.

Source: Statistics from the City Tourism Office of Puerto Princesa, 2008c

Regarding the tourism institutional structure in Puerto Princesa City, there are two levels of governance and jurisdiction. At the provincial level, the Provincial Tourism Office, under the division of the Governor is the office in charge of: a) promoting Palawan tourist destinations, and b) implementing the tourism programs of the province (Buñi, 2008, personal interview). At the city level, the City Tourism Office of Puerto Princesa, under the Mayor's office, is in charge of: a) promoting and marketing tourist destinations, b) identifying new destinations as tourism products, c) training and building local capacity, and d) licensing and registration of tourism establishments (Mohamad, 2008, personal interview).

From the non-governmental side, there have been efforts to promote sustainable tourism in Puerto Princesa, for instance the Palawan NGO Network Inc which promotes alternative tourism. Concerns on the negative impacts of touristic activities, specially derived from conventional tourism (e.g. economic leakages and damage to biodiversity) have arisen; therefore, such efforts have a strong focus on sustainable management of resources and community well-being.

Pasyar Developmental Tourism

Pasyar Developmental Tourism (hereafter Pasyar) is a program of the Palawan NGO Network Inc, which envisions at supporting community-based development and conservation initiatives. The Palawan NGO Network gathers a number of non-profit organizations which develop different programs in the island related to anti mining campaigns, people's rights, solid waste management, legal issues and advocacy. One of the components of the Palawan NGO network is the Palawan Access Center which involves three major programs: a) social services, b) solar panels, and c) Pasyar Developmental Tourism, started in year 2007. Pasyar is a local Cuyonon word meaning "*to travel leisurely*" (Zapanta, 2008, personal interview).

Pasyar envisions providing opportunities for alternative forms of ecotourism. It aims at supporting the conservation efforts of certain communities (Zapanta, 2008, personal interview). According to Zapanta (2008, personal interview) there is great potential to include the conservation activities of the people in tourism products by featuring such activities as a

tourism product. In return, Pasyar envisions securing economic benefits for the communities and their conservation efforts. Pasyar also assists with training and developing strategic plans, which includes various matters for improvements in the community, such as sanitation, education, etc. Pasyar works closely with the City Tourism Office. The City Tourism Office supports the initiative by promoting the sites and by providing training, so then the tourism activities developed by the communities cope with tourism standards (Zapanta, 2008, personal interview).

Pasyar has established several tour-packages which bring the visitor attention towards the conservation efforts of a number of organizations or communities. Some of the sites featured by Pasyar's packages are:

- Palawan Conservation Corps Nature Park;

- Sabang Mangrove Paddle-Boat Tour;

- Ugong Rock;

- San Carlos Mangrove and Culture Tour; and,

- Puntod Ilis Marine Sanctuary.

In all of those sites, conservation initiatives are being carried out by some organizations and the local communities.

3.2 The Case-Studies

This research focuses on two case-studies. Each case-study is composed by a tourism-product and a community engaged with the development of such product.
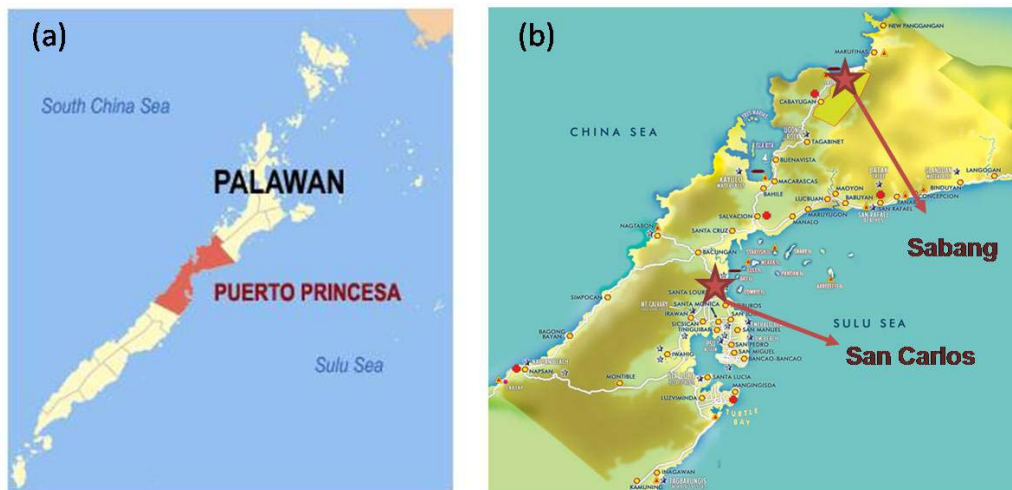

Figure 3-3 (a) Location of the City of Puerto Princesa in Palawan Island; (b) Location of the case-study sites within the City of Puerto Princesa

Source: (a) www.wikipedia.com; (b) www.real-state-palawan-philippines.com

The first case is the Community of San Carlos in which a community-based "mangrove and cultural tour" is being developed. The second case includes the Community of Sabang, which offers the example of a community-based "Mangrove Paddle-Boat Tour" (Figure 3-3).

3.2.1 Case Study 1: San Carlos Community and its mangrove and cultural tour

San Carlos is located within the City of Puerto Princesa, and belongs to Barangay Bacungan. The geographic location of San Carlos is in the east side of the island, close to the coast facing the Sulu Sea (See Figure 3-3).

The community of San Carlos, as of year 2006, had a total population of 205 individuals distributed in 52 households. The total population of Barangay Bacungan the same year was 1,501 individuals, distributed in 342 households (City Planning Office of Puerto Princesa, 2006). From San Carlos' population above the age of 15, 19.02% were engaged in some sort of economic activity as of year 2006. The industry and the services sectors were the most representative of the economic activities developed by the local population (Figure 3-4a). Within the industry sector, 100% of the population worked in construction; whereas, within the services sectors, 94% provided community, social, and personal services; and 6% worked at wholesales and retail trade (Figure 3-4b). The primary sector seemed to be not very relevant. Only 13% of the population was employed or worked on that sector, from which, 80% of the people worked in agriculture and the remaining 20% in fishing (Figure 3-4c) (City Planning Office of Puerto Princesa, 2006).
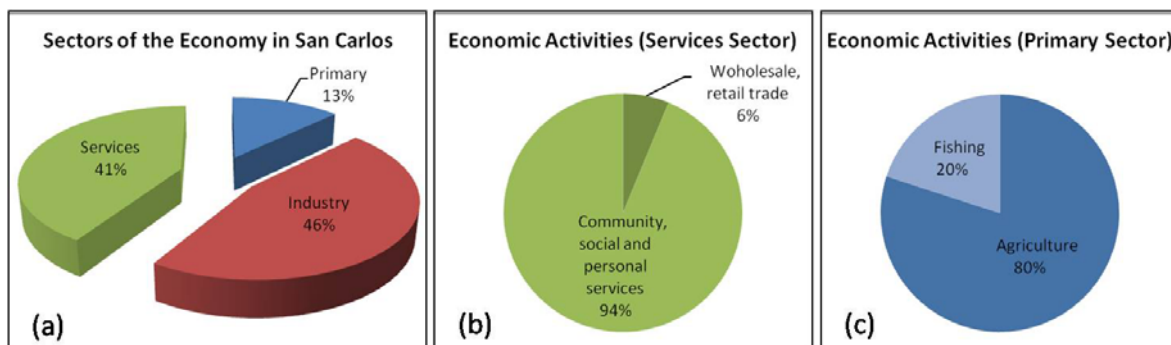
Figure 3-4 (a) Sectors of the economy as of year 2006 in San Carlos; (b) Composition of the Services Sector of the Economy in San Carlos; (c) Composition of the Primary Sector of the Economy in San Carlos

Source: Based on statistics of City Planning Office of Puerto Princesa, 2006

Regarding quality of life, some indicators used by the City Government of Puerto Princesa shows, except for the indicator "households not in makeshift housing", rather a low coverage of services, particularly "access to safe water" in San Carlos (see Figure 3-5 bellow).

These statistics, as compared to Sabang's (Figure 3-8), also reflect that access to services in San Carlos in 2006 were below Sabang's results. But, the percentage of malnourished children was slightly higher in San Carlos in relation to the corresponding percentage for Sabang (City Planning Office of Puerto Princesa, 2006). However some discretion should be suggested to interpret this data as a real indicator of expressing high/low-quality of life. Access to electricity is surprisingly low in San Carlos. The electric system in this site is connected to the main power-line of the island; while in Sabang is not, and still the statistics show higher access to

electricity in Sabang. Appendix II presents the results of most of the indicators used by the City Government of Puerto Princesa to measure quality of life in San Carlos.

Figure 3-5 Percentage of some quality of life indicators for San Carlos as of year 2006

Source: Based on statistics of City Planning Office of Puerto Princesa, 2006

The Tourism-Product

The geographic location of San Carlos could favor its tourism-product due to the closeness to one of the most important destinations of the urban center of Puerto Princesa City. San Carlos is located relatively close to the urban center (approximately 18 km away) and much closer to the coastline facing Honda Bay, a very popular destination for Puerto Princesa City's visitors. Honda Bay holds a number of dotted small islands. In each of them, often there is at least one resort. A number of daily-tours are offered to visitors and locals from the City of Puerto Princesa to visit Honda Bay, which includes hoping from one island to another during some 5 to 7 hours. This activity starts at a village's pier not far from the city center (around 15 km away).

The tourism-product in San Carlos is being developed at the moment. It includes a variety of elements, such as a mangrove boat-tour along a section of Bacungan River (which holds a mangrove buffer zone), intercultural activities, homestay families, and catering. The river in which the boat-tour takes place connects the community of San Carlos with Honda Bay (Figure 3-6), thus providing a link between what could be the beginning of a packaged-tour in the community which could end up at Honda Bay.

Figure 3-6 Geographic location of San Carlos community's tourism-product area

Source: Satellite Image, Google Earth, 2008

3.2.2 Case Study 2: Sabang Community and its mangrove paddle-boat tour

Sabang is also located within Puerto Princesa City, and is part of Barangay Cabayugan. Sabang is geographically located in the opposite side with respect to San Carlos; that is, in the west-side of the island, facing the South China Sea (Figure 3-3).

According to the statistics developed by the City Government of Puerto Princesa, the total population in Sabang as of year 2006 was 942 individuals, distributed in 185 households. The total population of Barangay Cabayugan the same year was 2,204 individuals distributed in 443 households (City Planning Office of Puerto Princesa, 2006). According to the same source, 32.7% of the population above the age of 15 was involved in some sort of economic activity. The services sector embraced the most important economic activity for the local population (Figure 3-7a). Within the services sector the following economic activities have been identified in Sabang: a) wholesale, and retail trade; b) transport, storage, and communications; and c) community, social, and personal services. Also the primary sector –agriculture, fishing and forestry (according to the City Government of Puerto Princesa), was relevant for the local economy, as opposed to San Carlos (see Figure 3-7b and 3-7c). In Sabang fishing represent the economic activity with higher percentage of people involved within the primary sector (City Planning Office of Puerto Princesa, 2006).
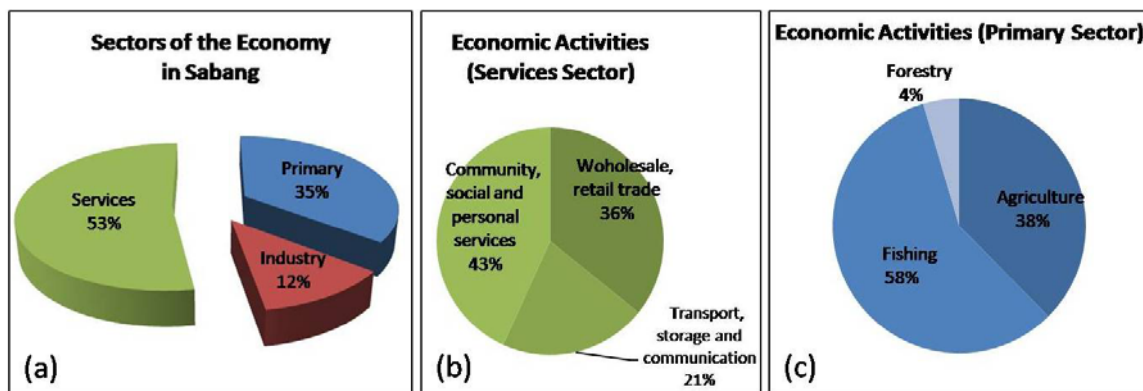
Figure 3-7 (a) Sectors of the economy as of year 2006 in Sabang; (b) Composition of the Services Sector of the Economy in Sabang; (c) Composition of the Primary Sector of the Economy in Sabang

Source: Based on statistics of City Planning Office of Puerto Princesa, 2006

According to the statistics of the City Government of Puerto Princesa some quality of life indicators, as of year 2006, lied on the upper range (Figure 3-8). However, as previously underscored, such results should be interpreted with certain prudence. For instance, eventhough 60% of the households in Sabang have access to electricity (City Planning Office of Puerto Princesa, 2006), it has to be noted that the village is not connected to the main power-line of the island. By the contrary, access to electricity in Sabang is dependent on private small power plants (often run with gasoline), which are used only for a couple of hours daily. In fact, it could be fair to argue that access to services in the village is rather poor, regardless the relatively good figures showed by the statistics of Based on statistics of City Planning Office of Puerto Princesa. Appendix II presents the results of most of the indicators used by the City Government of Puerto Princesa to measure quality of life in Sabang.
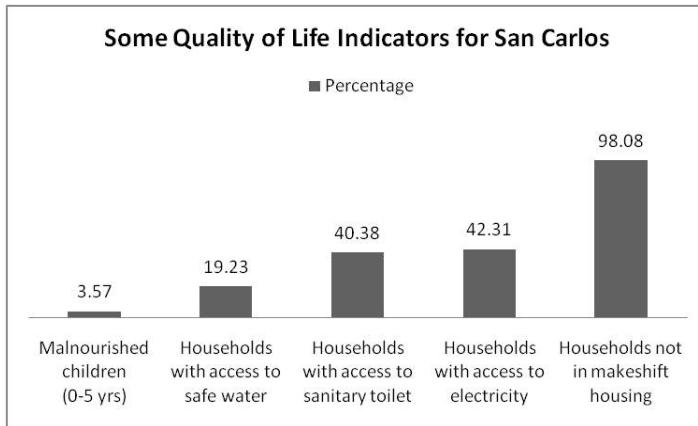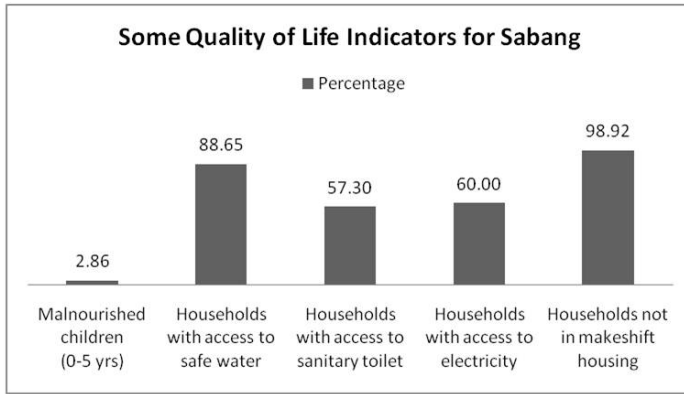
Figure 3-8 Percentage of some quality of life indicators for Sabang as of year 2006

Source: Based on statistics of City Planning Office of Puerto Princesa, 2006

The Tourism-Product

The tourism-product developed in Sabang is the Mangrove Paddle-Boat Tour, in operation since 2001 (Moyano, 2008, personal interview). It is relevant to note that this paddle-tour might be also benefited because of the relatively closeness in respect to one of the most important tourist destinations of Palawan. Sabang hosts the most prominent touristic attraction in the City of Puerto Princesa and, perhaps, one of the most important attractions of the entire Island: the so called Puerto Princesa Subterranean River. This UNESCO Natural World Heritage Patrimony site (UNESCO, 2008b) receives an average of 500 visitors each high-season-day (Mendoza, 2008, personal interview).

The Mangrove Paddle-Boat Tour is located in between the boat-pier of Sabang and the entrance to the Subterranean River (Figure 3-9), which can be reached by boat, or by an approximately 5 Km walk, either by the coastline or through the forest. Whereas the reception of the Mangrove Paddle-Boat Tour can be reached by a walk of approximately 900 m from the pier in the same direction towards the Subterranean River entrance. The tour consists on a short boat-tour by a section of the river located within an old has-mangrove forest. It takes approximately one hour and it includes a brief explanation of the relevance of the mangrove ecosystem as a support of the livelihood systems of the local population, particularly regarding fishing.

Figure 3-9 Geographic location of Sabang community's Mangrove Paddle-Boat Tour

Source: Satellite Image, Google Earth, 2008

4 Findings: ecotourism and community development in Puerto Princesa

This section presents the main findings of the field research in Puerto Princesa in eight subsections: 4.1) Legal framework; 4.2) The green political environment in Puerto Princesa; 4.3) About the perception of the concept of ecotourism; 4.4) About the perception of the concept of community development; 4.5) Tourism and community development in Puerto Princesa City; 4.6) Mangrove and culture tour in San Carlos Community; 4.7) Mangrove Paddle-Boat Tour in Sabang Community; and, 4.8) Interactions between mainstream and community-based tourism.

4.1 Legal framework

The most relevant legal apparatus concerning part of the scope of this research is the Strategic Environmental Plan (SEP) created for the island-province of Palawan. In 1992, President Corazon Aquino signed into law the Republic Act (RA) 7611 adopting SEP and creating the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD), as the office in charge of overseeing SEP implementation (UNESCO, 2001)[5].

SEP is a comprehensive framework for the sustainable development of Palawan. As such, it seeks at improving the quality of life of its people -present and future generations- through the use of complementary activities of development and conservation. Such development shall foster: (a) *ecological viability*, to protect the physical and biological cycles that maintain natural ecosystems; (b) *social acceptability* through participatory processes that ensure equity in access to resources and the benefits derived from them; and, (c) *integrated approach* to achieve a holistic view of environmental issues, as well as opportunities to implement and sustain the SEP (RA 7611, section 5).

Especial attention is given to the *social acceptability* component of SEP in this research, due to the importance of participatory processes in community development strategies. Two tools are identified within the framework provided by SEP: *Free and Prior Informed Consent* (FPIC) of the indigenous peoples, and *social acceptability* within the framework of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA). The FPIC was created under the Indigenous Peoples Act – Republic Act No. 8371- in 1997. It denotes the consensus -free of manipulation and coercion- of all members of the indigenous group, according to their customary laws and practices, and after fully revealing the intention and scope of the activity in a language and process understandable to the community (Republic Act No. 8371, section 3). FPIC is required prior to the development of any project or activity within an ancestral domain which has the potential to affect the indigenous peoples. Meanwhile, the scope of the second tool, social acceptability, is applied to non-indigenous groups. In this context, those groups are consulted as part of an EIA procedure, prior to the issuance of the approval of a project.

PCSD is the body in charge of issuing clearance certificates for the development of every project in Palawan, including tourism related projects. According to Alex Marcaida (2008, personal interview), Chief of the Education and Extension Division of PCSD, during the approval processes, communities are involved and consulted when the proposed project has

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[5] Under the umbrella of RA 7611 and the SEP, the PCSD manages and monitors the Environmentally Critical Areas Network (ECAN), which is a system for the conservation and controlled development of Palawan, through the creation of various levels of protection (i.e. core zones, buffer zones, and multiple/manipulative use area) of terrestrial and coastal zones (RA 7611, section 7&9).

the potential to affect them. He notes that, in ecotourism projects, priority should be given to the community to ensure that they are benefited by the project (e.g. through job opportunities). That is where PCSD plays a role: "in securing that a project will not make a big of an impact" and that the community will not be affected negatively (Marcaida, 2008, personal interview).

However, in the opinion of Attorney Gerthi Anda (2008, personal interview), Executive Director of the Environmental Legal Assistance Center (ELAC), the FPIC has been violated by the government, especially when it relates to mining projects. She believes that such social acceptability tools can only succeed if the communities are well informed. Otherwise, they leave the door open for manipulations. In addition, communities are not part of such processes. They are only consulted and in many cases, imposed. "To make an impact the community needs to be empowered and to participate in planning processes, even if they are not an organization", she notes (Anda, 2008, personal interview). Anda (2008) also suggests that development planning should be participatory and she recommends following the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach, a proactive governance tool involving the members of the communities into planning processes (Anda, 2008, personal interview).

4.2 The Green Political Environment of Puerto Princesa City

The Mayor of Puerto Princesa City, Edward S. Hagedorn, first elected in 1992, is recognized as an environmentally friendly leader, who has improved the conditions of the city and quality of live of its population. Mayor Hagedorn stayed in power from 1992 until 2001, completing his three term limit. But in 2002, he was re-elected. Since then, he has been at the head of Puerto Princesa City Government.

Mayor Hagedorn sees environmental conservation as the core of development. He has placed *tourism* and *agriculture* on the top of his agenda, as the two main industries to be promoted, in order to achieve sustainable development (Hagedorn, 2008, personal interview). As opposed to other cities in the Philippines, Puerto Princesa is a mining-free area. Mayor Hagedorn, is the main supporter of such policy, which creates recognition from environmental groups and the people; but also a lot of controversy with national agencies and other sectors of the economy (Daquer, 2008, personal interview).

As part of the conservation strategy, the City Government centers a lot of attention on education and awareness-rising programs to the community. Two successful examples are: (a) the massive mangrove planting event held every 14th of February to rehabilitate the coastal area (Daquer, 2008, personal interview); and (b) the massive tree planting to rehabilitate terrestrial areas, that congregates thousands of people every last Saturday of June.

The non-governmental sector also acknowledges that in Puerto Princesa City there are a lot of efforts towards environmental education and awareness rising. "Puerto Princesa City is vey lucky in relation to other places in the Philippines, where people do not have such awareness" recognizes Erwin Galido, Executive Director of Palawan Conservation Corps (Galido, 2008, personal interview). Since the population of Puerto Princesa is not too large, and also considering that there are a relatively big number of organizations working towards education, it seems like there is a big opportunity to achieve a change of people's behavior regarding a friendly attitude towards nature.

4.3 About the perception of the concept of ecotourism

The general understanding of the concept of *ecotourism* among the people interviewed for this research is portrayed as the balance between enjoyment, conservation, and development. For Maribel C. Buñi, Chief Officer of the Provincial Tourism Office, ecotourism is a "type of tourism where there is balance between conservation of the environment and tourism activities" (Buñi, 2008, personal interview). On the same line, Albert Mendoza, Special Operations Officer of the Subterranean River National Park, conceives ecotourism as "responsible travel to enjoy nature without destroying it" (Mendoza, 2008, personal interview). In the same way, Teody Onrade, owner of Mary's pension in Sabang, takes ecotourism as the type of tourism in which "local people in the site get the benefits and also the tourists enjoy nature" (Onrade, 2008, personal interview).

Other interviewees, however, add another element to the concept of ecotourism. Melinda S. Mohamad (Senior Tourism Officer – City Tourism Office) and Augustin Mapa (President of San Carlos Developmental Residents Association) in addition to enjoyment and conservation, acknowledge a third element: involvement of communities. For Mohamad, ecotourism is the "vacation to natural environments attached with responsible ecotourism practices (conservation), enjoying nature and with communities being a central part of development" (Mohamad, 2008, personal interview). Mapa, states that ecotourism involves three elements: "community participation; conservation of the natural resources; and satisfaction of tourists, who have a bigger role in ecotourism…; tourists should have ethics and should know about the area so that they get to enjoy and experience it" (Mapa, 2008, personal interview).

4.4 About the perception of the concept of community development

The perception of *community development*, as it could be anticipated, varies from community to community and even among people within the same community. Community development is a challenging concept. It is not only related to money, but also to health, education, sanitation, etc. - it is *quality of life* (Anda, 2008, personal interview).

Galido and Anda (2008, personal interviews) coincide that community development has a different meaning for people in San Carlos than for people in Sabang. For San Carlos' members, it means livelihood, but also promotion of the work they have done in terms of conservation, such as marine sanctuary protection. Oppositely, the culture of the people in Sabang (and Barangay Cabayugan in general) is more directed towards the economic element of development. In addition, Galido brings up that in San Carlos, people work together even on voluntary basis. But in Sabang, the people are used to get funding from many organizations supporting the Subterranean River National Park; thus, there is no sense of common effort towards a goal (Galido, 2008, personal interview).

This statement is supported by Mendoza (2008, personal interview), who adds that for the people in Sabang community development is directly linked with economic gains. His argument lies in the fact that the traditional livelihood activities, such as fishing, have been replaced in Sabang by providing services i.e. the boat operations, eventhough that activity was initially considered only as a complementary source of income (Mendoza, 2008, personal interview).

The above mentioned arguments about the perception of community development in San Carlos' inhabitants could be somehow supported by the answers of some interviewees. For Mapa, quality of life depends on good health and life expectancy. He adds "the mangrove provides pure air and we are able to eat organic food and fish; that keeps us healthy and

provides us a good quality of life" (Mapa, 2008, personal interview). He strongly believes that people in San Carlos community are not poor, eventhough studies have concluded that they live below the poverty line -below USD 1/day of consumption as set by the World Bank (World Bank, 2008). Mapa's argument is based on the fact that they have natural resources to depend upon for their survival (Mapa, 2008, personal interview).

Soledad Ibrahim, community member in San Carlos, links community development to livelihood and economic growth. She also acknowledges that with economic growth, other elements of community development are reached. For her, having additional income will represent an opportunity to send her children to school to pursue further education, for instance (Ibrahim, 2008, personal interview).

A less common link to community development was brought forward by Nestor Aniar, Counselor of Barangay Bacungan. He links community development to conservation. Aniar states that, besides livelihood support, the community needs additional income to sustain the conservation initiatives they carry on (Aniar, 2008, personal interview).

While the last two arguments link community development to economic growth, the relevant point is the sense of community. Both: Ibrahim and Aniar (2008, personal interviews) favor a communitarian benefit by economic growth, regardless some obvious personal interests (like pursuing their children's further education). This is the basic difference between the perceptions about economic growth of the people in San Carlos and that of Sabang. Economic growth for the people in Sabang is oriented only towards fulfilling the self-interests.

4.5 Tourism and Community Development in Puerto Princesa City

Various arguments have been brought forward regarding the understanding of the link between *tourism* and *community development*. For instance, some risks associated with the development of tourism have been recognized by some interviewees. For Anda (2008, personal interview), if tourism is not well managed, there is certainly a risk of destroying the natural resources and harming cultural aspects (Anda, 2008, personal interview). Communities in Puerto Princesa have to learn from other regions of the country, such as Boracay Island, where tourism is out of control and has impacted the environment and the culture, instead of contributing to sustainable development (Anda, 2008, personal interview). Similarly, in the City Tourism Office it has been acknowledged the potential risks of uncontrolled tourism. In this case, the suggestion brought forward is to develop more sites as tourism destinations, in order to split the pressure (Mohamad, 2008, personal interview).

On the other hand, Rogelio Daquer, City Environment and Natural Resources Officer, optimistically maintains that if the tourism projects (infrastructure and activities) are in harmony with nature, then there is no threat to the natural resources and biodiversity (Daquer, 2008, personal interview). Daquer supports the idea of promoting ecotourism in Puerto Princesa, especially since it is a mining-free city. Tourism constitutes one of the main industries and it is also an important means for development (Daquer, 2008, personal interview).

Nevertheless, other challenges have been recognized as well. For instance Anda (2008, personal interview) argues that within the context of community development, the challenge of ecotourism is to make sure that everyone participates and gets the benefits under the same conditions. According to the same source, in order to develop ecotourism activities, it is necessary that the people from the community, somehow, become entrepreneurs. They have to do marketing, create the product, and ensure quality and satisfaction for both, tourists and

hosts. Moreover, it is important the involvement of all the members of the community and the Barangay officials (Anda, 2008, personal interview).

Galido (2008, personal interview) supports such statement and stresses that under the current conditions, ecotourism in Puerto Princesa does not benefit the local communities directly. Galido believes that the communities have been indirectly benefited only from the mainstream tourism, i.e. through employment opportunities; but in terms of conservation, not much has been done, he adds. The number of mainstream tour operators and travel agencies is growing. In the view of Galido, for such agencies the environment does not represent any concern, but the economic gains which can be obtained from it. Thus, it is necessary that these companies change the way they operate in order to protect the environment and truly benefit the locals (Galido, 2008, personal interview).

4.6 Mangrove and Culture Tour at San Carlos Community

"Kung walang pakinabang, walang pakialam"
"If you don't understand, you will not act"
(Marlon Tamsi, San Carlos Community)

A tourism project was started in San Carlos as part of an initiative named Community Based Coastal Resource Management (CBCRM), from which Barangay Bacungan is part. Such initiative belongs to a 10 year focal program that involves legal advocacy, education, and resource management with the standpoint of empowering communities to become stewards of the management of natural resources. Communities are given the opportunity to engage in a livelihood project that will sustain any effort to manage their resources (Anda, 2008, personal interview).

Under the perspective of CBCRM, conservation is an integral part of such tourism project. It has been widely acknowledged by the community members the importance of protecting the mangroves as a livelihood tool for the people (Mapa, 2008; Aniar, 2008; Ibrahim, 2008, personal interviews). In addition, they know that the market strategy for ecotourism is a pristine environment, which is only possible if conservation work is in place. In this way, Sitio San Carlos has done a good job conserving the mangrove[6], recognizes attorney Anda (Anda, 2008, personal interview).

In this context, San Carlos chose to be involved in ecotourism, or to be more precise "developmental tourism" as they call it. Anda (2008, personal interview) highlights that such livelihood projects intend to be complementary to their main activities such as fishing and agriculture. This statement has been supported by some members of the community when they assured that tourism will not replace their current livelihood activities (Ibrahim, 2008, personal interview). However, there are also people who support the idea of placing tourism as the main livelihood source. "If the tourists bring good income and if I have the option I will probably leave the fishing, because it is not so good" (Aniar, 2008, personal interview).

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[6] For instance, in 2001, the mangrove rehabilitation project started with governmental funds throw a cooperation program with the Japanese Bank. By 2003, 378.67 has of mangrove were recovered and the Department of Natural Resources awarded the land as "Community-based Forest Management" to San Carlos Community (Tamsi, 2008, personal interview).

The tourism project is in process of development. Pasyar is supporting the community in the planning process. In addition, the members are getting education about the mangroves and their ecosystem, as well as the necessary training to become tour guides. In the opinion of some members of the community, such project is a good opportunity to get an additional source of income and gain more learning about the protection of the mangroves (Aniar, 2008; Ibrahim, 2008, personal interviews).

The community is going through a preparation stage, which is at its end. As recognized by Anda and Galido (2008, personal interviews), San Carlos community is ready to start operating the tourism project. It is important to highlight that, at the community level, there is already an institutional structure which provides the basis for the development of the project. San Carlos Developmental Residents Association (hereafter "The Association"), established in 1997, was created with the main purpose of protecting and conserving the mangrove resources (Tamsi, 2008; Mapa, 2008, personal interviews). It is now composed by 83 members, who agreed on starting the tourism project as a livelihood means (Mapa, 2008, personal interview). The tourism project is all run by the community, with the support of Pasyar at the marketing and transportation stages. All 83 members are involved in providing the service (under a shifting scheme). It is planned in a way that each family gets the same opportunity to participate, that is the same opportunity to obtain an economic benefit (Mapa, 2008, personal interview).

The *tourism-product* involves a day trip package. In this day trip the tourists are part of a cultural show (youth dance), string performance, singing, "merienda" (Spanish word used in the Philippines for snacks), community interaction, and mangrove paddle tour (Zapanta, 2008 and Mapa, 2008, personal interviews). Accommodation will be developed in the future through a homestay program. Zapanta (2008, personal interview) acknowledges that the community needs to be prepared to handle such program, in order to minimize the impact in the community life. In addition, the infrastructure must be improved (Zapanta, 2008, personal interview).

With regard to the homestay program, community member Nestor Aniar (2008, personal interview) believes that it will be an interesting experience because the tourists can learn about the culture of the people, "they can get involved in agriculture practices, organic gardening, learn how the people live in order to stay healthy" he affirms. In addition to the cultural exchange, his expectation from the program is to get an additional income for the Association to invest in conservation projects, and for the expenses of the homestay family. With such income, he will be willing to invest on the education of his children (Aniar, 2008, personal interview). Community member, Soledad Ibrahim (2008, personal interview) shares such vision with Aniar, and adds that the homestay program could be a good opportunity to get additional income and improve the conditions of her house.

Regarding the price and the distribution of the gains, two scenarios were brought forward:

1. According to Mapa (Association's President), the tour package costs 75PHP per person (around USD 1.67), from which 60PHP (around USD 1.33) goes to food preparation and cultural shows (performers and string band); while, just 15PHP (around USD 0.33) goes to the Association, and it is used basically for communication purposes (Mapa 2008, personal interview).

2. According to Zapanta (Pasyar), the price is 100PHP per person (around USD 2.22). The gains are divided up as follows: 60% for the tour guide of the day and 40% goes directly to the Association. This is usually used for monitoring, maintenance of boats,

training, reforestation, meetings, meriendas, communication, and travel expenses for leaders to participate in meetings (Zapanta, 2008, personal interview).

Concerning future investments of the gains, in first place the Association envisions improving the facilities for tourists. The first project they have in mind is to build a floating restaurant and purchase boats for the mangrove paddle boat tour. Then, they wish to invest in social services for the members of the community, such as education. The goal is to provide scholarships for the children of the community to pursue further education (Aniar, 2008, personal interview). According to Mapa (2008, personal interview), the main focus will be supporting conservation initiatives to protect the environment. Mapa believes that illegal cutting of mangroves can be decreased if all the members of the community have the chance to be benefited from the tourism project (Mapa, 2008, personal interview).

So what is the status of the project? Although it is in its initial stage, the community has already received around 120 tourists. From this number, almost 100% are local visitors. According to the planning process, the community is capable to handle no more than 20 tourists per day. Mapa (2008, personal interview) argues that it is critical to determine the capacity of the environment, because they are not willing to sacrifice the natural resources in order to receive more tourists. "In that case, it is better not to have the tourists and rather go fishing", he affirms. The Association also envisions receiving quality tourists that understand the importance of conserving the mangrove. So far they provide some information to the tourists, but in the future they will build an information centre with scientific information about the mangroves and its significance (Tamsi, 2008, personal interview).

4.7 Mangrove Paddle-Boat Tour at Sabang Community

The Mangrove Paddle Boat-Tour is not new for Sabang community. It has already been operated by the Mangrove Paddle-Boat Tour Association since 2001. This Association started with the support of Conservation International and the Protected Area Management Board. By now, the support of Conservation International has ended (Moyano, 2008, personal interview).

The number of Association's members has been decreasing over time. At the beginning, around 30 applications were received from people of the community to become members of the Association. Later, the number of members went down as soon as they realized that the work they were supposed to do was designed to be done on voluntary basis. In 2006 there were 5 active members, but now it remains only 4, from which Brigida Moyano, most popularly known as "Lady Mangrove" is the leader (Moyano, 2008, personal interview). For Moyano the motivation to continue as a member of the Association is linked to her religious believes. By taking care of the environment, she is serving God (Moyano, 2008, personal interview). Crisanto Cacho and Delfin Murillo, also active members, consider themselves as nature lovers; thus being part of the Association is an opportunity for them to conserve the environment (Cacho, 2008; Murillo, 2008, personal interviews).

The Mangrove Paddle-Boat Tour is run by the 4 members of the Association. The tourism-product involves a paddle-boat tour along a river located within an old mangrove forest. During the tour, the local guides provide information on the importance of conserving the mangroves from an environmental point of view, but also as a means of livelihood for the local people. The main attraction is the old-grown mangrove forest and the fauna found along the river. The highlight of the tour is a mangrove song created by "Lady Mangrove" and performed by the tour guides. In addition, a planting activity is the closing ceremony of the

tour. Each person is challenged to plant a mangrove tree and to come back in several years to monitor its growth. The tour in total lasts for approximately one hour.

The price for the tour is 100PHP per person (around USD 2.22), and the gains are divided up as follows: 80% for the tour guides of the day (there are usually 3 tour guides); 15% for maintenance of boats and emergencies of the tour guides; and, the final 5% for the Barangay Council (Moyano, 2008, personal interview). For Moyano, Cacho and Murillo (2008, personal interviews) the economic benefit they receive from the tour operation is not enough to sustain their families. Some days, when they are lucky, they receive 8 to 10 visitors, but some weeks they don't have any visitors at all. This could respond basically to the following reasons:

- 80% to 90% of the visitors to the area come as part of a mainstream tourism package, which involves one day trip from the city of Puerto Princesa with the sole purpose of visiting the Subterranean River (Mendoza, 2008, personal interview).

- Lack of information and promotion.

- Lack of time for visiting the mangrove.

- Some visitors consider it is too long of a walk from Sabang pier to the Mangrove Paddle-Boat Tour Information Center (1 km approximately).

It was noticed the lack of information regarding the tour at the Park Management Office, located at Sabang pier. Such office belongs to the Park Management and is the place where every visitor to the Subterranean River must get the entrance permit[7]. This lack of information has an impact on the amount of tourists who get to know about the existence of the mangrove paddle-boat tour. For instance, Ann Norsoller and Rikke V. Steffensen, Danish tourists, didn't know about the mangrove tour eventhough they were staying at Mary's Pension, located approximately 100 meters from the mangrove Information Center (Norsoller and Steffensen, 2008, personal interviews).

According to Mendoza (2008, personal interview), during the high season an average number of 500 visitors come to Sabang to visit the Subterranean River. Foreign visitors are most likely interested in visiting the mangrove, but unfortunately they account for only 10% to 20% of the total tourists coming to Sabang (Mendoza, 2008, personal interview). In one day during low season, 141 visitors visited the Subterranean River (Laab, 2008, personal interview); from which none took the time to stop by the mangrove. When two mainstream travel agencies in Puerto Princesa City were asked about the Mangrove Paddle-Boat Tour, they argued that it is not included in their daily package to Sabang because it takes too much time to do such visit (Tourister Rent a car – Travel & Tours, 2008; Island Paradise Tours & Conventions, 2008, personal interviews).

The members of the Association wish to increase the tour operations. They would like to improve their infrastructure (i.e. information center and toilets), in order to attract more visitors and provide a better service. Unfortunately, they don't receive any additional financial support, eventhough the mangrove forest lies within the limits of the Subterranean River National Park. According to Daquer and Mendoza (2008, personal interviews), the mangrove forest receives support from the Park's administration in terms of monitoring and patrolling,

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[7] The admission fee to the Subterranean River National Park is 250PHP per person, which is invested in the conservation of the park.

but not in financial terms, since they were constituted as a community-based, self-sustained project. In addition, the members of the Association are also interested in increasing the number of members, but will only be willing to accept committed people who will support the project no matter the conditions (Moyano, 2008, personal interview).

Regarding promotion and marketing, a strong hit has been the promotion at the Philippines' ABS-CBN TV channel and CEBU Pacific Airline's magazine (June/July 2008 issue). This is considered as a great opportunity for them to attract a bigger amount of visitors. Moyano (2008, personal interview) perceives that after such promotion, they are slightly getting more visitors. In addition, since last April, the Association has become partner with Pasyar, which is also supporting in the marketing, promotion, and operation of the tour.

Finally, it is important to mention that people at the Subterranean River Park Management consider the Mangrove Paddle Boat Tour as an unsuccessful project. Furthermore, that office is willing to take over its operations in the future. In that case, Mendoza (2008, personal interview) considers the benefit for the community will come in the form of job creation as boat-men and tour-guides will be demanded.

4.8 Interactions between mainstream and community-based tourism

As previously noted in section 3.2 the two examples used as case-studies in this research could have some kind of interaction with mainstream tourism operations. In the case of San Carlos, at the moment of the field-research it was not obvious to note explicitly some type of connection between the tourism-product being developed in that community and mainstream tourism. However, the relative closeness of the area where the community's tourism product is being developed and one of the most important mainstream tourism destinations in the city of Puerto Princesa, Honda Bay, offers an interesting link. Puerto Princesa City is, for most of the tourists visiting Palawan, the main operations center. Besides being the main population center of the island, most of the tours around Palawan start or end in Puerto Princesa. Honda Bay is probably the most important touristic attraction close to the city. Visitors can arrange a variety of daily tours to do island hoping around the bay and also to visit a number of nearby island-resorts.

All the elements of those tours are promoted by the private sector, with the exception of the Hobbai Boat Association. The association is a community-based initiative, where each family member, is allowed to have one boat to operate with standardized prizes, thus the association's members from the community get benefited in equal conditions.

San Carlos is also located very close to Honda Bay. In fact, Bacungan River, in which the mangrove tour is being developed, offers a natural link between the community and Honda bay, given that the river meets the Sulu Sea precisely in Honda bay. Furthermore, a tour package being developed at Pasyar, which includes San Carlos' tourism product, is designed so the visitors start the island hopping tour by visiting San Carlos first. That provides an obvious link between the mainstream island hopping tours with the "developmental tourism" product being developed in San Carlos.

Similarly, in regards of Sabang, even though the focus of the present study is the Mangrove Paddle-Boat Tour, it is important to characterize the mainstream tourism being developed outside the boarders of the protected area. Tourism in Sabang has been developed and promoted by the private sector. The beach at Sitio Sabang counts with a varied range of accommodation establishments, from a number of eco-lodges to few luxurious hotels. Along the beach of approximately 1km. long, there are around 11 hotels, mostly owned by people

coming from other parts of the country. This has brought of course benefit to some community members, through the creation of job opportunities. However, as a feature of mainstream tourism, local people are not involved in the planning and management of tourism activities; and even more, many of the people involved in those jobs related to tourism are not necessarily from Sabang, but from other regions of the country.

Teody Onrade, owner of a small hotel - Mary's pension, affirms that all the people employed at his hotel (8) come from other places. In addition, he insists that he would like to see more tourists coming to Sabang. If he had the opportunity to expand the facilities of the hotel, he would do it without any doubt (Onrade, 2008, personal interview).

5 Discussion

This section discusses ecotourism and community development, firstly from a conceptual point of view, and then from the implementation point of view based on the analysis of the models suggested by San Carlos and Sabang Communities. The discussion is presented in 3 subsections: 5.1) Perception of the concept of ecotourism and its implementation; 5.2) Perception of the concept of community development and its implementation; and, 5.3) Community-based ecotourism model proposed for Puerto Princesa communities.

5.1 Perception of the concept of ecotourism and its implementation

About the concept

As the concept of ecotourism certainly is controversial, various points of view and perceptions are expected about what ecotourism is and the way it should be implemented. Among the people who were interviewed during the present research, there are two elements of ecotourism which are widely recognized. First (and most important) the natural environment playing a role as the tourism product; and second, the conservation initiatives. Such perceptions truly correspond to the broader definition of ecotourism, as suggested by Scheyvens (2002, pg. 69).

The previous is probably not very surprising considering that all the interviewees in Puerto Princesa are people involved in tourism activities and environmental matters in one way of another[8]. Therefore, it should be expected to find a general understanding of ecotourism as a concept. Similarly, it is also relevant to drive the attention to the fact that Puerto Princesa City has been branded as the "Ecotourism Capital of the Philippines".

Evidently, some interviewees have a deeper understanding about the concept. Some of them acknowledge that besides the previously mentioned two elements of ecotourism, there is another equally important element: *community participation*. Linked to that element, the well-being of the people in the communities has been attached. But, it seems like, in some cases, the idea of community participation and community benefit is not properly conceived within the framework of ecotourism. This is argued over the fact that in several occasions, it was mentioned that, in Puerto Princesa, the tourism industry supports *development* and *local involvement* by the creation of job opportunities (as mentioned by Marcaida, 2008 and Daquer, 2008, personal interviews).

However, it is not safe to link the creation of jobs with community development. As argued by Scheyvens (2002, pg. 8), it is difficult to sustain that a positive change had occurred if job creation transforms a community of self-sufficient farmers and traders into a community of employees reliant on a resort for seasonal (and sometimes unskilled) jobs as cleaners and service personnel; or as boat-men and tour guides, as suggested by Mendonza (2008, personal interview). In fact, as noted by Galido (2008, personal interview), under the current conditions in Puerto Princesa, the so called ecotourism does not benefit directly the communities, since the benefits come only in the form of job creation. By the contrary, the argument, in this respect, is to run a community-centered approach, where the people are the main subjects of development, and where the concerns and needs of them are taken into account.

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[8] From a total of 21 interviewees, six work at the governmental level - directly involved in tourism, natural resources management, and sustainable development; four belong to the non-governmental sector – promoting conservation, sustainability, community participation, and human rights; six are community members - involved in tourism projects; two are mainstream travel agencies; two are independent tourists; and one is a hotel owner.

Nevertheless, in general terms, other essential elements of ecotourism were not mentioned. This was reflected on the way the ecotourism projects are implemented in Puerto Princesa. As argued by the supporters of the concept, ecotourism encourages visitors' education in order to build environmental and cultural awareness. It was observed the lack of the "education component" in the ecotourism activities. There is certainly a great potential to educate the tourists. Puerto Princesa is rich in natural resources, biodiversity, and culture; and in addition, it hosts areas of great geological interest. Though, the "education" was limited to promotional materials about the tourism destinations; thus, the visitors do not really get the chance to learn the environmental connotation of the region from a more technical/scientific perspective.

About the implementation of the concept

In addition to the previous, as noted in the conceptual framework of this research, ecotourism presumes a sustainable management of the resources in order to minimize social and environmental impacts. It strives to be small scale – low impact tourism in pristine, undisturbed natural areas. However, it was palpable that these elements were not always taken into consideration when developing tourism activities in Puerto Princesa. The case of Sabang's Subterranean River National Park offers an interesting example to illustrate the previous; regardless the fact that it is not one of the case-studies. The Subterranean River receives an average of 500 visitors per day during high season[9]. According to Mendoza (2008, personal interview), the carrying capacity of the place is 400 visitors per day: 200 in the morning and 200 in the afternoon. The problem is that the capacity has been already surpassed, and even worst all 500 visitors arrive in the morning. The previous, of course, does not reflect a sustainable management of the natural resources, and even less a proper approach to keep the area undisturbed. This example corroborates some of the critics attached to ecotourism, as mentioned in section 2.1.3: (a) the rapid rate of growth is challenging to manage; (b) not all the people coming to the place are ecotourists or environmentally aware; (c) the tourism-product is focused on a prime site - the Subterranean River, which is vulnerable for degradation; and finally, (d) higher demands of infrastructure, such as boats for the tour.

Moreover, it was perceived the high degree of foreign investment that dynamizes the tourism industry in Puerto Princesa, especially at the accommodation sector (e.g. hotels and islands resorts). This certainly also brings impacts, such as economic leakages, high prices, and limitations on direct participation of the local people, supporting once again the critics to ecotourism. The two case-studies are surrounded by areas which are not an exception of that.

As recognized by Anda (2008, personal interview), the type of tourism developed in Puerto Princesa, especially in Sabang, is named "ecotourism" because the product is nature itself. But it is not community-based sustainable tourism, because the communities are not part of the planning and management process. Social acceptability and FPIC, as recognized by law in the Philippines, are insufficient legal instruments as for ensuring proper community participation (Anda, 2008, personal interview). Such argument supports the concept of CBET, which emphasizes on the social dimension of ecotourism. Following the principles of CBET the local communities are the center of tourism development, where they actively participate and take control of its planning and management. It seems adequate then to suggest that in practice, the reference to 'community-based' initiatives should be stressed, in order to clearly reveal the role of the communities in the planning, decision-making and management of the projects, among other things.

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[9] During a local olympic-games event (that lasted two weeks), around 1000 people per day visited the Subterranean River (Laab, 2008, personal interview).

On the other hand, it is essential to recognize that such community participation can be undermined. There are various issues suggested in the literature that affect community participation, as shown earlier in section 2.1.4. Representativeness and amount of participants, as well as intensity of participation are important questions that come as a product of other issues like: (a) lack of sense of ownership, (b) lack of consensus, and (c) homogenization of the community members. From the case in Sabang community, it can be observed that eventhough the Mangrove Paddle-Boat Tour was conceived as a community-based tourism project, the heterogenization of the community, the lack of commitment, and the lack of representativeness are affecting the project and weakening the institutional structure – The Mangrove Paddle-Boat Tour Association. In that sense, San Carlos Community can take Sabang's example as a learning opportunity, to ensure that the community is empowered and united to start the tourism project, and most important to gain stability and a long term achievement.

Another issue brought up by the literature is the lack of financial capital in the community to develop infrastructure. Both, Sabang and San Carlos Communities are experiencing such limitation. Of course, the tourism projects suppose self-financial sustainability. But, before the projects can reach a self-sustaining stage, it is certainly a challenge for the communities to improve their infrastructure, which, on the other hand, is essential to attract visitors. This makes them somehow dependant on external funding, which is not sustainable in the long run.

It has also been acknowledged that CBET is used as a tool for biodiversity conservation. Such element is an evident target of the tourism projects in Sabang and San Carlos Communities, where the heart of conservation is the mangrove forests. From the community members involved in the tourism projects, it was perceived a high sense of environmental awareness regarding the importance of the mangroves. However, the challenge is to spread out such awareness to the other people inside and outside the communities who also benefit from the mangroves. This is important in order to achieve also a change in their attitude towards conservation of the natural resources. Furthermore, it is also essential to transmit such awareness to the visitors and to promote a change of behavior on them. Proper education and informational materials, as well as learning through observation are highly required. Unfortunately, as mentioned above, the education component of the projects are not well developed and need further strengthening.

Finally, considering that the tourism industry is a priority strategy in the "ecotourism capital" of the Philippines, the *governmental support* is vital at every stage of its development. First, at the *community level*, for instance, Barangays officials should become an integral part of the planning process. Such involvement is essential to reach a balanced consensus between Barangay Councils and people's organizations, which will luckily ensure long term sustainability of the tourism projects, besides fair benefits for the community. And second, at the *city level*, various forms of support should be expected, by policy-making which copes with the objectives of the tourism industry in its implementation stage.

Policy making can offer a contribution by creating the instruments which could offer the *legal support* for the development of community-based tourism initiatives. This is argued, under the fact that although the current legal framework recognizes social acceptability as a way to involve communities in projects' development, it does not represent a participative planning mechanism (as suggested by the Québec Declaration on Ecotourism). Participatory planning should take place in order to achieve equitable social, economic and environmental benefits from ecotourism, but also in order to ensure the minimization of negative impacts.

In practice, it has been mentioned that such social acceptability limits to a consultative process –instead of a participatory approach- where the people from the communities affected by the development of ecotourism projects are consulted many times in an arbitrarian way that leads them to take uninformed decisions. Thus, it is necessary to reinforce the existing legal framework, to ensure participative involvement from the communities. Certainly, along with that, incentives are also needed for the communities. Those incentives could result in a) transforming community members into the main players; b) creating a sense of ownership of the projects; and c) achieving a high level of representativeness from the community members. In this sense the role of the city government is to create such incentives. But most importantly, the city government plays a key role in providing the information and education to the local communities so that they become knowledgeable to take well-informed decisions adjusting their common interests.

In addition, local policy should pursue the management of foreign investment more carefully to cope with the objectives of CBET. It has been acknowledged the risks of allowing high foreign intervention in the tourism industry may cause negative impacts, especially economic leakages. Thus, the governmental policy should be expected to foresee such risks and to take the actions to sustain local well-being. For instance, policy instruments should be created in order to ensure direct community participation and in order to avoid the economic leakages of tourism.

Furthermore, on the *implementation stage*, the City Tourism Office, should be expected to provide support, not only in promotion and marketing strategies (which are certainly important), but also in continuous training for the members of the community. In addition, a strong partnership between this office and the City Environment and Natural Resources Office is important to ensure that tourism in Puerto Princesa truly responds to the conservation efforts of the city; and vice versa, so that, the natural resources are sustainably used within tourism development.

5.2 Perception of the concept of community development

Issues related to development are very complex to analyze and discuss. Development can be seen from various perspectives. Often, the first idea that comes to mind is industrial expansion and economic growth. However, a broader vision includes also social and environmental aspects. When it comes to 'community development', according to the proposed conceptual framework for this research, it entails the improvement of quality of life of the members of a community. Of course, 'quality of life' is a non-tangible concept that cannot be measured, since it involves physical and psychological aspects. Nevertheless, there is a tendency to "measure" it by accounting only for the physical factors (e.g. health, income and access to services), while leaving behind the psychological ones, such as stress, worry, pressure, happiness, and others.

From the social perspective, community development is linked to the idea of 'well-being'. Such an idea is usually reflected in the human development paradigm that involves coverage of basic needs – education, nutrition and health care – and enhancement of capacities to manage the resources effectively. Under that perception, the Human Development Index (HDI) proposed by the UNDP, for instance, measures human development from three dimensions: life expectancy (living a long and healthy life); adult literacy and enrolment at the primary, secondary and tertiary level (being educated); and, purchasing power parity, and income (having a decent standard of living) (UNDP, 2008b). In that sense, the Philippines is

ranked number 90th out of 177 countries, with a HDI of 0.771 – medium human development[10]. It is above the average HDI for all developing countries of 0.691 and for medium HDI countries of 0.698 (UNDP Ecuador, 2007, p. 4-5). Naturally, it is acknowledged that the HDI is not a comprehensive measure of human development, but it envisions at providing a broad view of the progress of each country respect to one another.

At the local level, the City Government of Puerto Princesa also uses some indicators to measure the well-being of its populations (see Appendix II). As mentioned in section 3, such indicators must be taken with certain reservations. It is important to highlight that it is out of the scope of the present study to analyze quality of life indicators in the communities. Nevertheless, the author considers essential to drive the attention to certain issues regarding the indicators used by the City Government of Puerto Princesa in Sabang and San Carlos communities. According to the results, Sabang is at an advantage position compared to San Carlos community regarding access to basic services. These are actually surprising results since, what was observed during the field research, is not corresponding to some of the results. Regarding electricity for instance, Sabang community is not connected to the public grid, as compared to San Carlos. It was experienced the lack of electricity in the village the whole day, except for 4 hours at night where the private owners of power plants provided electricity for their own benefit. Yet, according to the City Government indicators, Sabang has a higher access to electricity. This leads to the idea that such indicators are measured somehow only regarding access, but not the *quality* of the service. The same judgment is given to housing conditions, sanitary toilets, and waste management.

Another point to think through is that, for Sabang and San Carlos, less that 4% of the children population (0-5 years) suffers from malnourishment. This number certainly does not present a bad scenario. It is probably due to the fact that the basic meal in the rural communities of Puerto Princesa is based on fish and rice, which are consumed in every meal (usually that is what people eat only). Then, is it appropriate to argue that eating fish and rice every day for every meal is good quality of life? Perhaps, from the perspective of many persons belonging to the industrialized world, it could hardly be said so. But from the point of view of the members of the local communities in Puerto Princesa, that indicator might be an appropriate indicator of well being. When Agustin Mapa, member of San Carlos Community and President of the Association, was asked his perception about quality of life, enthusiastically responded it is linked to good health, which comes from having pure air that the mangrove provides, plus eating organic food and fish every day (Mapa, 2008, personal interview). This argument leads Mapa to affirm that San Carlos community is not poor (eventhough the people live under poverty line – USD 1/day) as long as they have natural resources to depend upon for their survival (Mapa, 2008, personal interview). This is what motivates Mapa to put lots of efforts into conservation initiatives for the mangrove forest.

In San Carlos community, it was found that Mapa's perception is shared somehow by the other members of the community. Particularly, it seems to be a consensus on the fact that the mangrove forest provides the elements to ensure well-being, and therefore, it must be conserved. However, it was also recognized that the people living in the community are poor and need some additional source of livelihood and income to ensure other elements, such as education and health. The interesting feature of San Carlos is that the sense of community is latent. The people want the community to be developed as a whole, in terms of additional income to support the initiatives of the group, such as conservation and education (i.e. under a

[10] Among the low HD countries, the highest has a HDI of 0.499, and the lowest, of 0.336. And from the high HD countries, Qatar is an average one with 0.875 (UNDP, 2008b).

scholarship scheme). There is of course the interest of the individuals to increase their economy, but that is not the priority. San Carlos' community members know that the development of the community will benefit all of them in the same conditions (or at least that is what they envision).

Oppositely, the perception of community development in Sabang has been unfortunately corrupted. In the first place, there is no such sense of community. Furthermore, there is no agreed perception of development. It has been mentioned several times during the field-research that people in Sabang envision economic growth only – motivated by the fulfillment of the self-interest. This has been reflected on the way the village is being developed, where private owners of hotels and tourism facilities are the main players. Of course this has also affected the Mangrove-Paddle Boat Tours Association. The four members remaining obviously have other motivations besides money to keep working on the project, where they operate in voluntary basis. It has been recognized by the members of the NGO sector in Puerto Princesa that it is challenging to involve Sabang members in conservation projects, training, and even livelihood projects, since they are only willing to participate when they get an economic incentive.

5.3 Community-Based Ecotourism Model proposed for Puerto Princesa communities

As mentioned in section 1.3 the focus of the present study is to gain a deeper understanding of the concept of ecotourism as a means to community development, so as to reconcile the link between ecotourism and community development. In particular, the focus is to explore the ways in which ecotourism can support community development, by taking a look into the correspondence between conceptualization and implementation. After a short discussion on the perceptions about the concepts of 'ecotourism' and 'community development', this sub-section discusses -under the tourism value chain model presented in section 2.1.1- the proposed model for community-based ecotourism in Puerto Princesa. The intention is to show the way in which the communities are involved under such a model; as well as to identify potential opportunities and limitations towards ensuring community development.

The proposed model is an initiative of the Palawan NGO Network Inc, through the Pasyar program. The network focuses on promoting community development and conservation initiatives in Puerto Princesa. It supports the communities in terms of providing training, creating environmental awareness, strengthening skills, building capacity, providing advice, providing legal assistance, and fostering livelihood projects. This kind of support is an important element when developing community-based projects, as discussed in the following lines.

According to the proposed model, the community members are the main actors of the tourism project. The communities are directly involved in the design of the tourism-product, from the planning process to the implementation, but Pasyar provides its support at all stages of the value chain. Figure 5-1 illustrates such model. It is important to highlight that the model presented does not account for regional transportation. It assumes that the visitors are already in Puerto Princesa city and the destination sites are the communities, i.e. San Carlos and Sabang.
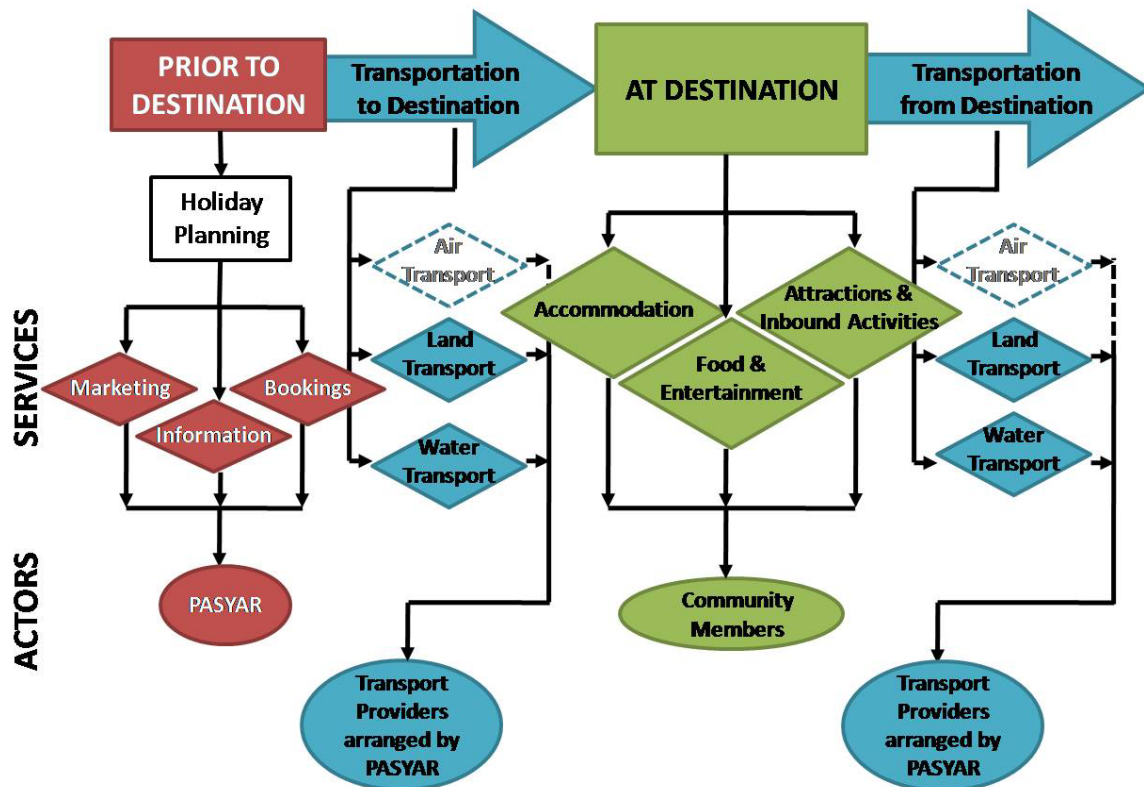
Figure 5-1 Tourism-services value chain as suggested by the Pasyar model

Source: Adapted from figure 2-2

At the *planning stage* (red in Figure 5-1), Pasyar plays somehow the role of a tour operator/travel agency. Pasyar is in charge of the marketing and sales, as well as arranging the transportation to the destination site.

The *marketing* so far has been done mostly locally, but the interest to reach the international market is latent. A good step has been the recent promotion of the projects in the CEBU Pacific Airline's Magazine, Smile Magazine (June/July 2008 issue 11). This magazine promotes five of the sites supported by Pasyar. The article called "Guardians of the Last Frontier" encourages the visitors to experience the 'new eco-adventures in Puerto Princesa and meet the locals behind these exciting projects" (CEBU Pacific Air, 2008, p. 46-52).

Other sources of promotion, such as television, have also been reached. This is a good strategy to broaden the marketing and sales scope. The national TV channel ABS-CBN, for instance, has already included Sabang Mangrove-Paddle Boat Tour in their advertisements. As recognized by the community members of the Mangrove Paddle-Boat Tour Association in Sabang, the promotion of the project in CEBU Magazine and ABS-CBN has represented, without any doubts, an important tool to attract people interested in supporting the conservation initiative and the livelihood of the locals (Moyano, 2008, personal interview). This reveals the importance of promoting the projects accurately as they intend to be, i.e. low impact, environmentally sound, and benefiting the locals, in order to attract quality (not quantity) tourists.

In reference to promotion, it is also worth noticing the great influence given by 'on-line' services. Thus, accounting with a web site, attractive and simple in content, is essential to

marketing, both to tourism developers and visitors. Destinations and tourists continue to expand internet use for marketing and bookings, as travelers are also rapidly increasing the use of internet to plan vacation tours. This, in certain way is setting aside the role of the travel agencies, which may be beneficial for the destinations, in the sense that sales expenditures can go directly to the destination, therefore, preventing economic leakages from the intervention of travel agents.

Meanwhile, the support of the local governments is also a key feature of the model. The City Tourism Office is also getting involved in the marketing and promotion of the projects (included within Pasyar in Figure 5-1). The support of the City Government is of paramount importance to foster such initiatives and provide the official support to the communities in the development of community-based ecotourism activities. In that sense, a strong partnership between Pasyar, the communities, and the City Government is also a good strategy, not only to attract visitors, but also as a means of learning experiences for further similar projects. These kind of participatory projects have a great potential to become a tool for community development if managed properly. Therefore, from the experiences in San Carlos and Sabang, many other communities can be benefited.

Concerning *transportation* (light blue in Figure 5-1), as mentioned before, under the proposed model the 'transportation stage' refers to the local transportation in Puerto Princesa to reach the destination sites. Thus air transport is not considered in the model. San Carlos can be reached from Puerto Princesa by land or boat; and Sabang, also by land or boat, though it is much easier to do it by land. This service is provided by local private transport owners. For instance, when boats are needed to transport visitors to San Carlos, the providers of the service are the members of Hobbai Boat Association, which is another community-based livelihood initiative promoted by the Palawan NGO Network. In that sense, this other community gets also indirectly benefited.

At the *destination* (green in Figure 5-1), the community members are directly in charge of delivering the tourism-product. Thus, it is important their empowerment and sense of ownership. For the case of San Carlos, the tourism-product is composed by the mangrove tour, cultural events (dancing and music) and food preparation. For Sabang, it is the mangrove paddle-boat tour, so the main form of involvement is through tour-guiding. Every member involved in one way of another has to be prepared to play a proper role and ensure a quality service. Besides social skills, technical knowledge, especially regarding mangrove's species, significance and functions, is required, mostly from tour guides. It is most likely that the visitor will be willing to learn about the mangrove forest, but also about the conservation initiatives and the benefits from it for the community. At present, the communities are not offering accommodation services. But San Carlos is foreseeing to develop a homestay program, where the locals will be directly providing the service at their homes. As the community members are in interaction with the visitors, it is important to enhance cultural and environmental consciousness at the local level, but also with the visitors. At this stage (the destination) is where the visitors' education component of ecotourism has the highest impact and, thus, is highly recommended.

The proposed model, as it is presented, is a *participatory* approach that places the community members as the main actors of the tourism projects. And as such, they are building and improving social and technical skills. This responds to the *principles of community development* presented in section 2.2.2: a) a *people-centered* approach, b) a *learning* opportunity, c) *local leadership* enhancement, and d) *common work*. The people are definitely the heart of the development actions and their common efforts are directed towards a common benefit. The purpose of the projects is to benefit the people, not only from the economic side, but also from the

environmental and social points of view. Besides acquiring an additional income for each family, the economic benefits also go to the community to support the conservation initiatives and improve education, among other aims.

The proposed model also fosters *small scale* tourism projects to take place. It intends to attract limited number of tourists per day (e.g. 20 for San Carlos), in order to keep the control over it and in order to ensure low impact in the natural environment. This responds to the *environmental element* of community development, which entails the conservation and controlled use of the natural resources in order to guarantee that future generations will have the same right to enjoy them. As mentioned earlier in section 4.8 an important point to highlight here is that both communities are located strategically close in relation to other mainstream tourism attractions. For Sabang, the closeness to the Subterranean River (most visited attraction in Puerto Princesa); and for San Carlos, the proximity to the city proper and Honda Bay, could represent an advantage in terms of ensuring a constant flow of tourists. However, tourism is an unstable industry, therefore, that constant flow of tourists could change in some point. On the other hand, the impacts of mainstream tourism can potentially affect also negatively the ecological stability of the mangrove forest, as well as providing a challenge for the management of other elements, i.e. waste management, if not properly managed and controlled. Therefore, it is important to ensure the compromise of the communities to keep the projects small scale, in order to minimize the impacts.

Another principle of community development is the *use of external support, without relying on it*, when carrying out the activities. Under the proposed model, it is shown that the communities have some degree of dependency on Pasyar, especially for the marketing and sales of the tourism-product; in addition to the other support that Pasyar provides, such as training and capacity building. Pasyar's support is, on one hand, the springboard for the development of the community-based tourism projects, and is definitely important to conserve. But on the other hand, it is a sign of dependency, which is not recommended. Without such support, the projects will not be likely to survive unless the communities build all the capacities needed to become self-sufficient. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that they should be able to provide every service, but have the ability and knowledge to outsource strategically the services they cannot provide.

The case of Sabang's Mangrove-Paddle Boat Tour is a good example to illustrate that dependability is not suitable to achieve long lasting results. Even though the few community members involved in the project are knowledgeable about the facts of the forest, and even considering that they are prepared to provide an interesting and enjoyable experience at the mangrove tour, they are not able to do the marketing and promotion of the site themselves, and even less to provide or arrange transportation for the visitors. They depend on other organizations to do such activities. Consequently, they are facing the lack of visitors to their site, which brings outcomes as lack of funding to support their conservation initiatives, and most important, to support their livelihood.

It is clear then, that as long as the communities are not able to provide all the services, they need other actors to be part of the value chain. Such is the example of the transport services, where local providers are inevitably part of the whole tourism-product. This, of course is positive for the local surroundings because it brings indirect benefits to other actors, which is especially true under the proposed model. The transport providers are private local owners with small scale businesses, and even part of other community-based associations like Hobbai, providing boat services in Honda Bay. However, some issues might arise when the actors involved are not local and small scale.

It has been suggested by Pasyar that there is the intention of involving mainstream travel agencies in the value chain of these community-based ecotourism projects. This could definitely bring support at the marketing and sales stages; but, if not managed properly, it could also represent a risk. Travel agencies, guided by their business interests, may start putting pressure on the communities to provide more services than planned, or to receive higher number of tourists, which may affect the purpose of the projects, and mistreat the aim of community-based ecotourism. Nevertheless, from a more optimistic perspective, such intervention may also represent a good opportunity to expand the right concept of community-based ecotourism among visitors, and also the local population. In this case, the intervention of other organizations, such as the City Government Tourism Office is essential, especially to provide the support to the communities and supply information about the aim of such projects and the benefits for the local people, so that the travel agencies play under conditions of respect towards the communities and the environment, while also benefiting from the projects.

To finalize, it is important to give emphasis to the fact that in the proposed model, one important stage of the value chain is missing. This is the *post-destination* stage (dark blue in Figure 5-2 below). As the model was presented (Figure 5-1), it was not mentioned the intention to evaluate customer satisfaction. However, as it has been mentioned in section 2.1.1, customer satisfaction is an important element to be measured, in order to improve the service. This can be used as a strategy to attract more visitors. Part of the tourism marketing seems to take place by informal wording. When somebody liked the product, they will encourage more people to have the same experience; and oppositely, if they didn't like it, they will discourage others to do the same. Therefore, achieving a successful high-quality tourism project is a key for the communities in order to ensure a good quality experience for the visitors. As suggested in the conceptual framework, customer satisfaction can be measured in various ways. From the visitors, the communities can measure satisfaction through surveys and feedback internalization, by learning from the visitors' direct opinion of the experience and the tourism-product as such. This is the moment when the communities can take corrective actions, avoiding mistakes and strengthening the successes. Other indirect forms of measurement can also be used, for example by keeping track of the number of visitors, volume of sales, frequency of sales, and fluctuations.

Hence, if travel mainstream agencies become also players in the model of community-based ecotourism as envisioned by Pasyar in the future, and if post-destination stage is included, as suggested in the paragraph above then the model of the value chain will look as shown in Figure 5-2.

This model seeks at responding to the principles of ecotourism and community development. This can happen as long as the projects maintain their aims: to be low impact, small scale, environmentally sound, cultural respectful, benefiting the locals, and supporting conservation initiatives to sustain the mangrove forests. Furthermore, *only* if the communities keep the control and management of the activities, such projects can ensure long lasting results in a sustainable way for the benefit of the community.

All of the previous discussion is of course on the basis that the community members do not lose the sense of community. That is, they do not get corrupted by the individual self-interest and by acquiring only economic gains. Enhanced local leadership is necessary to keep the community together working for a common goal. As recognized by Galido (2008, personal interview), strong environmentally and socially aware leaders are needed in the communities, so that the people trust them and follow their objectives.
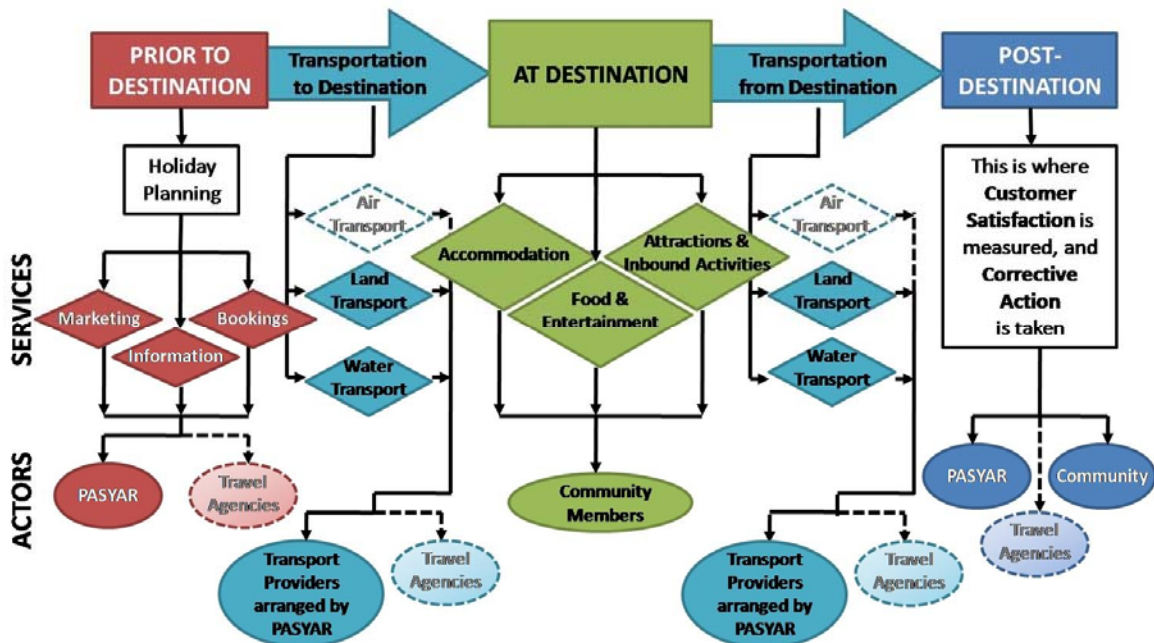
Figure 5-2 Extended tourism-services value chain model for community-based ecotourism

Source: Adapted from figure 2-2

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the other players involved in the value chain are crucial, as long as they support the communities in a positive way. The support from other organizations, such as the Palawan NGO Network Inc, is an essential tool for the development of the projects, but the communities cannot depend on it completely. The communities should continuously build skills so that dependency on the support of a third-party is minimized; otherwise, the self-sustainability of the projects is compromised. In addition, the governmental support at all levels is a key to ensure community development through ecotourism. As mentioned above, government intervention is needed from the policy and implementation sides to support the communities in the development of ecotourism activities. The intervention of other actors in the value chain of tourism is essential, but it is only positive as long as the communities remain in the heart of ecotourism activities.

Finally, it has to be acknowledged by all the stakeholders, that the tourism industry is not stable. It depends much on the trends of people's preferences, the political and social context of the destinations, natural events, etc (Kerr, 2005, p. 516). Therefore, it is important that the communities involved in such community-based ecotourism projects, continue performing the traditional activities that sustain their economy, such as fishing and agriculture, and conceive the tourism projects as an *alternative* source of livelihood.

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

An attempt to reconcile ecotourism as a means of community development

As presented in the conceptual framework, *ecotourism* is considered to be a suitable tool for sustainable development since it (in general terms) aims at conserving the environment and improving the well-being of local people. The concept of ecotourism entails: a) appreciation of nature; b) low visitors impact; c) small scale activities; d) environmental and cultural awareness; e) direct financial benefits for conservation; f) financial benefits for local people; and, g) interpretation of nature. Further elaboration on the principles of ecotourism demand local and indigenous community participation alongside the planning, development, and control of ecotourism activities. In addition, in order to stress the social elements of ecotourism, the concept of *community-based ecotourism* highlights the involvement of the local communities in ecotourism activities as part of the planning and management process; as well as the main beneficiaries of it.

Meanwhile, *community development* aims at improving local conditions of the members of the community, not only from an economic perspective, but also from a social and environmental standpoint. From the social side, community development is linked to the human development paradigm that involves coverage of basic needs and enhancement of capacities to manage the resources effectively. On this track, community development entails the improvement of 'quality of life', which is usually measured by indicators related to access to basic services, education, health, life expectancy, and income. From the environmental perspective, community development is linked to the efficient management of natural resources to ensure the same environmental benefits for future generations.

With these aims, the concept of community development also entails principles seeking at strengthening the capacity of people to take part in decisions that affect their development. In this sense, community development: a) promotes a *people-centered* approach to development, where the members of the community are the heart of development actions; b) uses *external support as a tool* of development activities, but does not rely on it; c) allows *learning* to take place and assumes the *balance between rights* and *responsibilities*; d) enhances *local leadership* and *participatory approaches*; e) allows *small scale projects* to take place; f) enables members of the community to *work together* to *meet basic human needs*; and, g) involves *conflict resolution* and *poverty mitigation strategies* to facilitate development.

From a conceptual perspective, it is possible to conclude that *ecotourism* and *community development* hold *compatible goals*. Some principles of ecotourism could lead to the achievement of some of the aims of community development. In this way, some possible links between the two concepts could be drawn. To mention some:

- First, and most important, the aim of community development of promoting a *people-centered approach* to development is strongly supported by some principles of ecotourism: direct participation and involvement of host communities in the planning, management and control of ecotourism activities; financial benefits and empowerment for local people; and, direct benefits for conservation of cultural resources.

- In turn, those ecotourism principles mentioned above also support *participatory approaches* to development and *enhancement of local leadership*, which is fostered by community development.

- Similarly, the aim of community development of allowing *learning* could be a benefit if environmental and cultural awareness arise through the development of ecotourism activities. In addition, other two principles of ecotourism- providing direct benefits for conservation of natural and cultural resources, and interpretation of nature- can also lead to *learning*, or more generally speaking, to education.

- Community development allows *small scale projects* to support development, and in this sense, ecotourism fosters low impact - small scale activities to preserve nature, and thus ensure sustainable development.

It is clear then, that ecotourism has a potential as a tool for community development from the theoretical point of view.

Opportunities of ecotourism as a tool for community development

From the two case-studies it can be drawn that, as long as the concept of ecotourism is properly understood, there are many opportunities for ecotourism to contribute to community development.

In first place, the increasing environmental awareness worldwide favors the selection of 'green' alternatives, e.g. ecotourism. Due to the increasing environmental and social awareness of people regarding tourism development, as well as the international pressure to minimize the negative impacts of the industry, ecotourism has the potential to offer 'greener' options for tourism activities, thus ensuring a flow of visitors to natural sites, in which the local communities can have the opportunity to participate.

In this sense, ecotourism brings great opportunities for the communities to get direct benefits from tourism activities. The previous is based on the notion that ecotourism stresses the importance of placing the communities as main players of the tourism projects, not only as planners, but also as implementators, thus avoiding economic leakages, and ensuring that the benefits can be used by the communities to achieve their conservation initiatives, as well as their social needs.

Furthermore, the existing level of environmental concern at the global scale has led to the development of an institutional structure at various levels (local, national, and international) dealing with environmental issues. The increasing number of environmental NGOs, environmental units at local governments, or the UN frameworks to deal with environmental concerns, is an example of such institutional structures. These institutional structures facilitate, among other things, learning and capacity building; as well as awareness raising processes. This offers opportunities for reinvestment in conservation activities, having ecotourism in this sense an enormous chance to be supported and developed.

Moreover, when environmental concerns are in the governmental agenda, ecotourism can find proper support from the governmental level. The previous could happen when local governments are dealing with development issues in their jurisdiction. If the government has placed the conservation of nature as an important element within its developmental strategies, then it seems reasonable that the government would look for developmental alternatives with minimum environmental impacts. It has been argued along this research that ecotourism could represent a suitable alternative for community development. The role of the governments, in that sense, is rather crucial. Considering the governments ruling capacity, for instance, one could think on creating an adequate normative to regulate foreign investment to cope with the ecotourism principles.

Perhaps, the most simple and relevant opportunity is the richness of the environmental surroundings as a driver to attract visitors. As mentioned earlier, ecotourism has an opportunity because a big part of the motivation of visitors to pick up a destination is based on natural beauty or environmental concern. The former is more common and could also motivate an increase of mainstream tourism besides increasing ecotourism. The latter is more specific to certain segment of society which find attractive to visit a place to foster some of the principles of ecotourism, such as supporting conservation initiatives or supporting the local people. In addition, there could be another opportunity in this respect if the site is easily accessible to facilitate the constant flow of visitors (which is true for the case-studies analyzed in this research).

Limitations of ecotourism as a means to community development

Even though the idea of promoting ecotourism as a contributor to community development sounds like a great opportunity; there are several limitations when the concept of ecotourism is put into practice. From the conceptual framework it is possible already to identify some drawbacks of ecotourism. But also from the field research, it is possible to identify specific limitations to ecotourism towards community development, thus legitimating some of the critics done to ecotourism.

It has been widely recognized that the concept of ecotourism has been abused many times as a market strategy (green washing). The previous argument usually blames on the fact that the definition of ecotourism is too vague, which leaves the door open for misinterpretations and misuse of the brand of 'ecotourism' by the tourism industry. The main arguments attached to the last point sustain that ecotourism principles have not always been taken into account. For instance, although, local participation and benefits for the communities is a principle of ecotourism, in practice it has been documented that the local communities do not always get involved in the planning, management and control of ecotourism activities. Even worse, they do not get direct benefits from it.

In addition, it has been claimed that ecotourism is not always a responsible alternative since it can bring the same negative effects as mainstream tourism. It this sense, it has been argued for example that ecotourism development represent a threat to the conservation of the environment, since the areas where ecotourism is implemented are usually very sensitive and vulnerable, thus undermining the aims of ecotourism. Regulation is again needed. For instance, the definition of a carrying capacity is therefore relevant. But, even more important is ensuring an adequate mechanism to control that certain criteria, like the carrying capacity of an ecosystem, and a regulatory framework are complied.

The lack of understanding of the concept of ecotourism has been proved during the field research performed in Puerto Princesa City. Among the interviewees there is a general understanding of the concept of ecotourism as a means of enjoyment of nature and protection of the natural resources. But the social elements are not always recognized. Even though community participation has been alleged as one of the principles of ecotourism during the fieldwork, it has been shown that this is not always understood and even worse it is many times manipulated. In Puerto Princesa, *community participation* is often recognized when the interviewees refer to the concept of *community-based ecotourism.* Only then, it is stressed the role of the local people as the main actors and beneficiaries of ecotourism.

The education component of ecotourism is not sufficiently fostered either. Education is another important element of ecotourism linked to the social benefits. Education in this case can happen in two directions: from external actors towards community members, and vice

verse. Education is not referred only in the formal way, which contributes to the social dimension of development at the community level. It also refers to building skills, which could be needed to host tourism activities. Furthermore, it also refers to the education component which is supposed to take place from the ecotourism activity towards the visitors, e.g. ecosystem functions of the site being visited by tourists. During the field research it was revealed, for the case of Puerto Princesa, that education is not being properly fostered. It has been limited to promotional material of the tourism destinations, but not to interpretation of nature for the visitors and the hosts in a more formal manner.

Furthermore, it was also demonstrated that ecotourism in Puerto Princesa does not always respond to its conservation principles. To give a specific example, it is worth mentioning that in Puerto Princesa's Subterranean River, "ecotourism" is basically all managed by mainstream travel agencies. The travel agencies bring around 500 visitors a day to a sensitive area that has a lower carrying capacity. This reflects that the ecotourism developed in this important site is not really fostering minimization of impacts and conservation of the natural resources.

Regarding local involvement, some of the limitations are:

- Lack of representativeness and homogenization at the community level. This weakens the local institutions and their ecotourism initiatives. It might even cause inequitable access to participation and benefits.

- Lack of sense of community, which makes more difficult to achieve community development through ecotourism. It is hard to work towards a common goal when the members of the community motivate their actions on the fulfillment of their self-interest.

- Lack of knowledge to take well-informed decisions, which increases vulnerability in the communities to be manipulated by other stakeholders. Local participation many times is corrupted and manipulated, due to the lack of proper participatory approaches and legal framework that support the communities in becoming part of the planning, management and control of ecotourism activities.

- Lack of financial capital in the community to develop infrastructure, which makes communities dependant on external support.

- Lack of skills and resources. If the communities do not have the capacity to provide the whole services, they depend also in the intervention of other stakeholders, which could represent a threat to the community-based initiative, if not regulated and managed properly. Of course, it has been highlighted the importance of external support for the communities, but the problem comes when such support results in never-ending reliability on external organizations.

General Recommendations (correspondence between concepts and implementation)

The first challenge is to work towards reinforcing the *understanding of the concept* of ecotourism among the stakeholders involved in ecotourism development.

At the *international level,* it is needed to place efforts towards the standardization of the concept and its principles, as well as the creation of measuring indicators. Only when the concept is widely understood, accepted, and anchored to the definition and principles, it can point towards a proper implementation that can certainly respond to community development.

Setting internationally accepted ecotourism standards would certainly serve as a tool for fighting green washing within the tourism industry, but also as guidelines for the national and local governments, non-governmental organizations, communities, visitors, and the tourism sector in general to understanding what does ecotourism really mean and how should it be implemented and controlled.

Such ecotourism standards should stress the social side of ecotourism and strengthen the element of 'local participation' as a condition of ecotourism development in order to achieve its aims and therefore contribute to community development. As such, tourism activities should be qualified as ecotourism only when the involvement and active participation of the local communities constitute a *pre-requisite* for its development. This aims at ensuring that the principles of ecotourism (minimize impact, contribute to the conservation of nature, education, build environmental and cultural awareness, provide financial benefits for the local people, etc) are pursued, with the communities as main players and beneficiaries. This recommendation is supported by the fact that it was proven during the field research that the concept of 'local participation' is easily exposed to manipulation. In addition, as mentioned above, in order to achieve community development through ecotourism, it is important to enhance the role of the local populations to become part of the planning, managing and controlling of the tourism activities.

There is a big opportunity coming up to create specific internationally recognized criteria for ecotourism certifications under the umbrella of the criteria for Sustainable Tourism Certification being launched soon this year. In this respect, it is adequate to support the initiative of EcoDestinet, which is working towards the development of the European Ecotourism Labelling Standard. Such tool aims at establishing a harmonization framework among the existing quality labels in Europe. Nevertheless, it is necessary to create international ecotourism standards, as a general framework. Later, in a further step each region should develop local standards that cope with its specific conditions, but aiming at a gradual unification and application of equal, or at least comparable standards worldwide.

Apart from reaching a proper understanding of the concept of ecotourism, it is even more important to work on the *implementation stage* (not just the mere rhetoric used by tourism developers to promote a 'better' form of tourism). In that respect, some points are brought forward.

At the implementation stage, the role of governmental bodies becomes essential to ensure support to local communities in the development of ecotourism activities. Policies aiming at supporting *local participation/involvement* as a pre-condition of *ecotourism development* are necessary to achieve community development through ecotourism. In this sense, regulatory policy instruments are needed to control the development of ecotourism and to ensure proper implementation. From the case of Puerto Princesa, it can be learned that stronger legal instruments to support local participation are needed. The social acceptability mechanisms already in use do not ensure local participation at the planning, managing and control levels because they are used as a consultative measure (often used only to fulfill a requirement), but not as a participatory approach. In this sense, the participation of local communities is limited to agreeing on the development of projects, many times under coercion. As noted below, a prerequisite to ensure local participation is to enhance the skills of local communities, so they become active actors in the planning process. Also, the use of policies could aim at regulating foreign investment in order to support the communities in getting direct benefits, by for example avoiding economic leakages.

In addition to regulations, the government also plays an important role in providing incentives and creating knowledge at the community level to ensure local participation. For example, during the field research, it was demonstrated that in Sabang there is not enough incentive for the people of the community to become part of the community-based ecotourism initiative, because there is no direct economic benefit from it. They depend on the arrival of visitors in order to get some benefit. In this sense, the government's role could be to encourage the community to become part of the project. First, the government could support in promotion, so then the tourist flow increases. Second, the government could also support by providing economic incentives, such as allocating part of the entrance fee paid at the Subterranean River National Park, to the mangrove paddle-boat tour to support their initiatives. Of course, this kind of incentives and support can only succeed if education is strengthened to: a) create the knowledge and skills at the community level to make well-informed decisions and to become self-sufficient; b) to create awareness at the private level (mainstream tourism) to be more responsible; and c) to receive from the visitors the respect towards community-based initiatives and encourage them to be part of those experiences.

Another example of governmental support is through the creation of standards to identify sound ecotourism activities first, and then to measure their performance. As mentioned above, this can certainly support at avoiding green washing and false ideas of ecotourism. But also, it can support the tourism-product as such, by for example being a tool for attracting quality tourists to the destinations. If visitors are well informed as to identify a destination and a tourism product which copes with the standards of ecotourism, it is more likely that they will be willing to support such projects and ensure the respect to the natural and cultural heritage.

Besides the support of the government, non-governmental organizations also play an essential role in supporting the communities, especially at early stages of implementation. Such support could be used for building skills and strengthening local institutions' capacity, and for providing legal advice and assistance at the planning and management levels. The goal should be to foresee external support as to get projects started, but it should be considered putting in place the necessary mechanisms to progressively ensure the self-sustainability of the projects, thus reducing the dependency of local communities on external assistance.

Lessons learned from the case-studies (implementation at the local level)

The models of community-based ecotourism proposed in Puerto Princesa (section 5.3) are good examples of participatory approaches to ecotourism as a tool to ensure community development. From those models, it can be learned that at the *community level* what is needed to promote community development through ecotourism is, in first place, a strong institutional structure capacity, that provides the basis for starting the initiative and bringing together the members with a common aim. In this sense, the presence of a driver of change is essential. As recognized in the filed research, people from the communities are highly influenced by the decisions of the leader, thus the presence of a good leader, who is environmentally and social aware is important to ensure that the principles of ecotourism are followed.

Second, the communities need to envision ecotourism activities as a means of additional livelihood only, thus preserving their traditional way of living. The vision of the members of the community in developing ecotourism as an *alternative* way of income generation is important, as well as taking ecotourism as an activity which fosters the protection of the natural resources that constitute their basic means of livelihood.

Also at the local level, it is possible to identify some other stakeholders who play an important role in the ecotourism models analyzed in this research (some of them have been already

mentioned). Some of those stakeholders are: a) the government; b) other non-governmental actors, such as organizations promoting conservation, development, and human rights; and c) other stakeholders involved in the tourism value chain, such as services providers (transportation or marketing for instance). They all have a role to play, and more importantly should work together with the local communities on the planning, implementation, and evaluation of ecotourism projects.

- At the *governmental level*, it is important the involvement of the authorities as an integral part of the planning process. In this respect, it is fundamental to reach balanced consensus with the people. In addition, from the *policy side* it is necessary to create the instruments necessary to offer the legal support for the development of community-based tourism initiatives, but also the necessary information and education to the communities and the visitors so they can make use of those instruments (as those mentioned early in this section).

- At the *non-governmental* level, the support provided by organizations promoting sustainable development and environmental conservation to the communities is essential. At the first stages of implementation the support of NGOs is fundamental to create the necessary conditions so ecotourism projects can start. Additionally, the contributions of NGOs lie on fostering that conservation of nature is not compromised by ecotourism projects and on creating the necessary mechanisms so then the benefits are directed towards the community members.

- Other actors involved in the tourism value chain also play an important role in supporting community development. It has been recognized that not always the communities have the capacity to provide all the services to visitors, therefore, it is necessary to involve other actors. In the case of the community-based ecotourism model proposed for Puerto Princesa communities, it was shown that the communities are not able to do the marketing and bookings themselves. The same happens with the provision of transportation services. Then, the intervention of other actors is needed, but as long as the main role of the communities is not undermined.

With this in mind, to conclude this section, it is worth mentioning again that if the concept of ecotourism is clearly understood and implemented, there is great potential for contributing to community development. The previous can be said on the basis that the principles and aims of ecotourism are compatible to the ones of community development and thus they can benefit from one another. Ecotourism can be considered as a tool towards community development, as long as community participation is a prerequisite for its development, and it contributes to the enhancement of the social, economic and environmental aspects of the individuals and the community. This suggests that the development of ecotourism activities opens up opportunities to bring additional income to the individuals, but also to benefit the community as a whole and the members individually. Some of those benefits are: building skills and knowledge; improving the living conditions - such as access to services; creating awareness on environmental matters; supporting conservation of the natural resources; and strengthening the sense of community and common benefit.

Suggestions for further research

Regarding the standardization of the concept of ecotourism, it is suggested to perform further research about the ways in which those standards could achieve an internationally accepted understanding of the concept and therefore a proper implementation, for instance, the development of international criteria and standards for ecotourism activities.

Regarding ecotourism development in Puerto Princesa, suggestions for further research are:

- Looking into the instruments needed to ensure that 'local participation' is strengthened as a condition of ecotourism.

- A market study to analyze willingness to pay of visitors to support community-based ecotourism projects. This recommendation is based on the perception that the prices set for the community-based tours in San Carlos and Sabang are rather low, and might not be enough to represent a real economic benefit for the communities and for the conservation initiatives.

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Abbreviations

CESD	Center of Ecotourism and Sustainable Development
CBCRM	Community Based Coastal Resource Management
CBET	Community-Based Ecotourism
CBNRM	Community-Based Natural Resource Management
DOT	Department of Tourism
ECAN	Environmentally Critical Areas Network
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ELAC	Environmental Legal Assistance Center
FPIC	Free and Prior Informed Consent
GEC07	Global Ecotourism Conference 2007
HDI	Human Development Index
ICDP	Integrated Conservation and Development Projects
IFAS	Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
PCSD	Palawan Council for Sustainable Development
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RA	Republic Act
SEP	Strategic Environmental Plan
STC	Sustainable Tourism Criteria
TIES	The International Ecotourism Society
UN	United Nations
UNCED	UN Conference on Environment and Development
UNDSD	UN Division for Sustainable Development
UNEP	UN Environment Program
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	UN World Tourism Organization

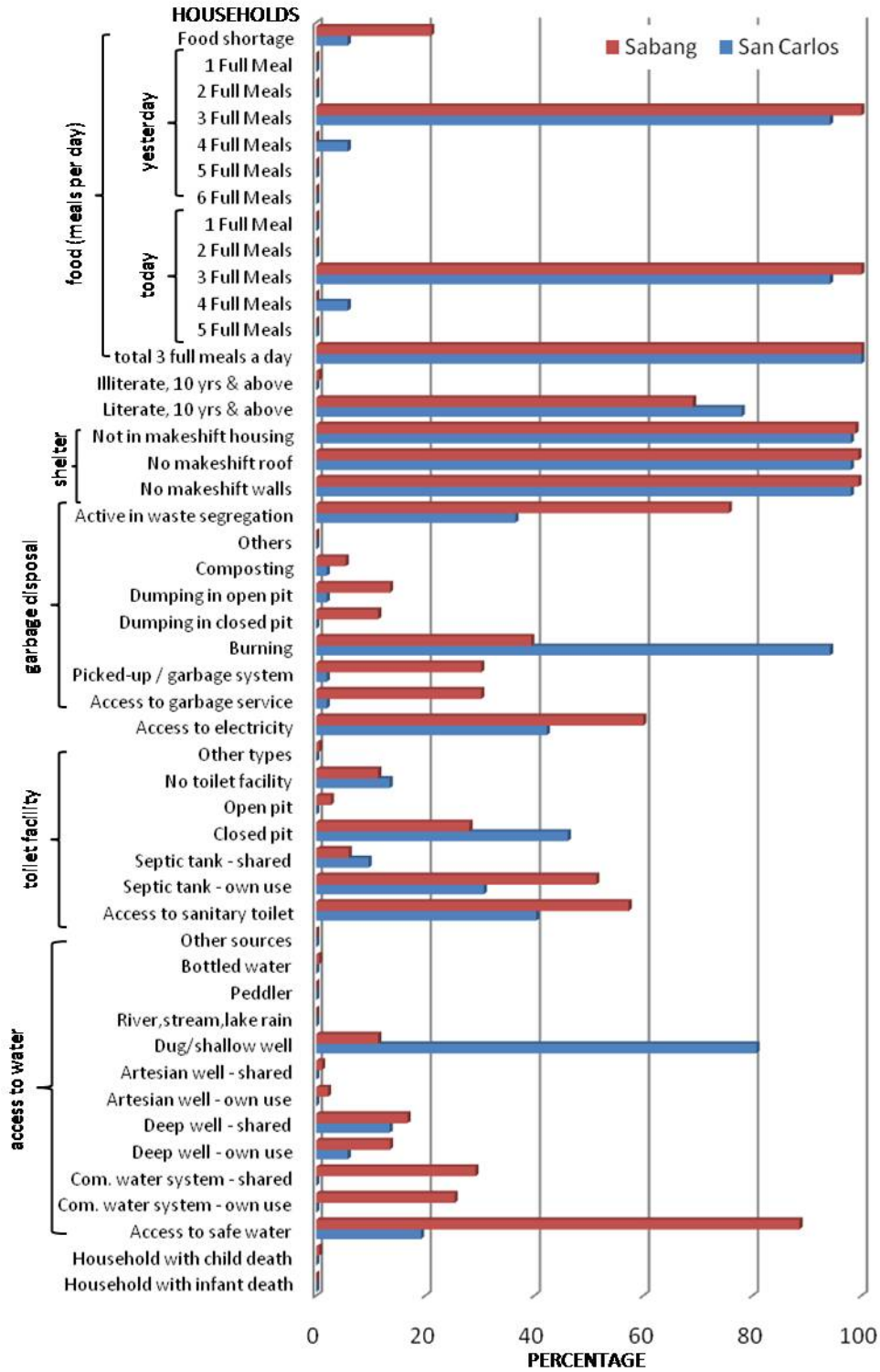WCED   World Commission on Environment and Development

WES   World Ecotourism Summit

Appendix I: Full list of Interviewees

Name	Organization/Entity	Position
Agustin Mapa	San Carlos Developmental Residents Association	President
Alex Marcaida	Palawan Council for Sustainable Development	Chief of the Education and Extension Division
Ann Norsoller	N/A	Tourist from Denmark
Anonymous	Tourister Rent a car – Travel & Tours	
Brigida Moyano	Mangrove Paddle Boat Tour Inc.	President
Crisanto Cacho	Mangrove Paddle Boat Tour Inc.	Association member
Delfin Murillo	Mangrove Paddle Boat Tour Inc.	Association member
Edward S. Hagedorn	City Government of Puerto Princesa	City Mayor
Erwin Galido	Palawan Conservation Corps	Executive Director
Gerthi Anda	Environmental Legal Assistance Center - ELAC	Executive Director
James Albert A. Mendoza	Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park	Special Operations Officer III
Margarette S. Lumauag	Island Paradise Tours & Conventions	President/General Manager
Maribel C. Buñi	Provincial Government of Palawan – Tourism Division	Chief Tourism Operations Officer
Melinda SJ Mohamad	City Tourism Office of Puerto Princesa	Senior Tourism Operations Officer
Melissa Zapanta	Pasyar Developmental Tourism	Responsible
Nestor Aniar	San Carlos Developmental Residents Association	Member of the Association and Member of the Board of Trustee
Nick Laab	City Government of Puerto Princesa City - Subterranean River Office in Sabang	Substitute collector
Rikke V. Steffensen	N/A	Tourist from Denmark
Rogelio C. Daquer	City Environment and Natural Resources Office - CENRO	City Environment and Natural Resources Officer
Soledad Ibrahim	San Carlos Community	Community Member
Teody Onrade	Mary's pension	Owner

Appendix II: Quality of Life Indicators (Case-Study Sites)

Some Quality of Life Indicators for San Carlos and Sabang as of year 2006 (Presented on % of coverage)

Source: City Planning Office of Puerto Princesa, 2006