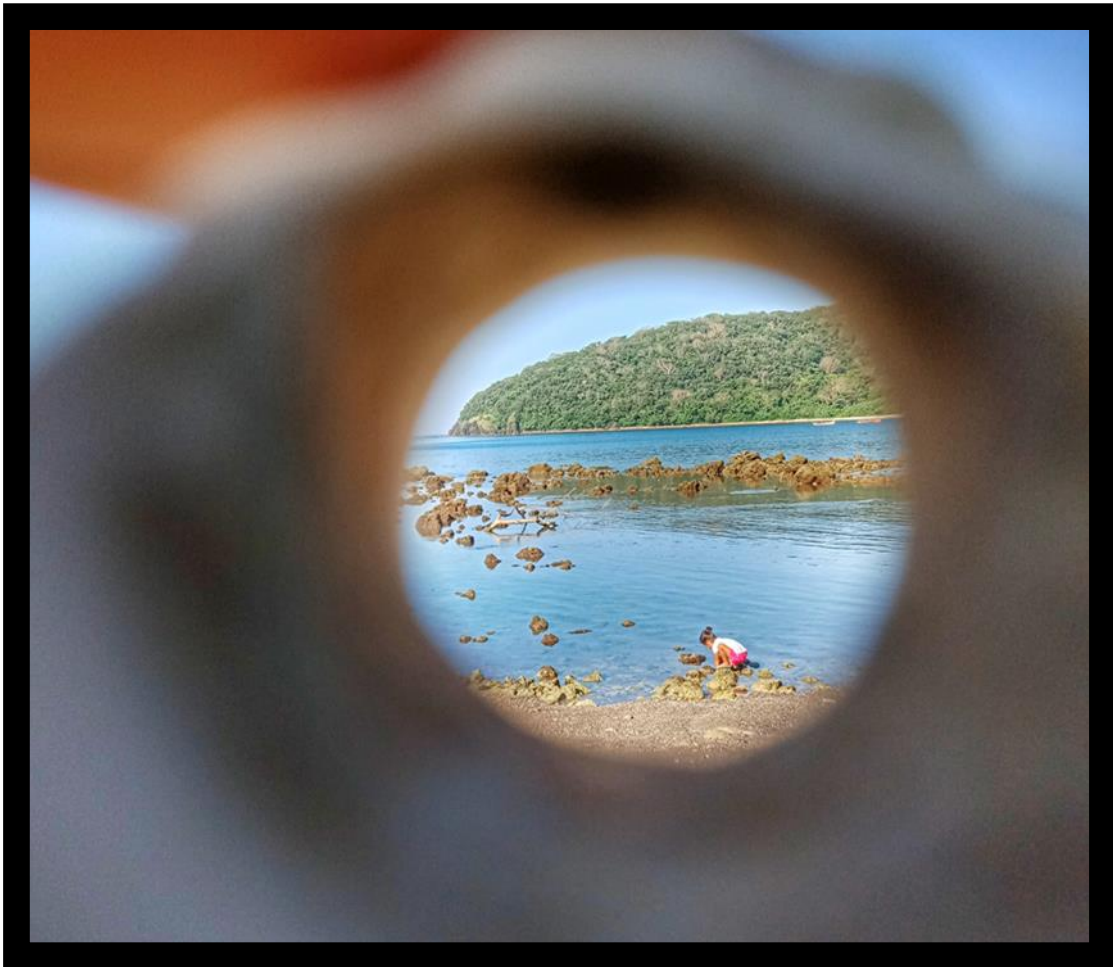




**We belong here! The Agta's anticipations, desires, and fears on the potential development of an Ecotourism Park on Palaui Island, the Philippines.**



Student: María Cristina Enjuto Crespo  
S2383713

Supervisor: Suzanne Naafs  
Field supervisor: Merlijn van Weerd

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## Summary

This thesis focuses on the indigenous Agta community from Palau Island. I research how the Agta's aspirations for the future are shaped and negotiated within the context of development projects on the island. These plans potentially include a Master Plan carried out in the Cagayan Economic Zone by a government corporation. This corporation has the mandate to develop Palau Island at a large scale for tourism purposes. This development plan involves the risk of exclusion of the Agta by limiting access to land, resources and formal jobs. These risks result in the Agta reinforcing the legitimation of access to land through the claiming as an indigenous group. With this thesis, I do not want to research the Agta as a static group anchored in the past. On the contrary, I look at the pieces of evidence and narratives about the past and the expectations for the future, to comprehend the social dynamics taking place on Palau. First, I illustrate how the concepts of tradition and modernity are reinvented on Palau Island. These concepts gain different connotations while listening to the Agta's narratives at the collective and individual levels. Second, I argue the feeling of belonging to a group (Agta, non-Agta), the relationship with the land, and the concept of class, influence how the people incorporated in the Master plan relate to its potential benefits and risks.

### List of abbreviations

<b>CADT</b>	Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title
<b>CEZA</b>	Cagayan Economic Zone Authority
<b>DENR</b>	Department of Environment and Natural Resources
<b>IKSPs</b>	Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices
<b>IP</b>	Indigenous People
<b>IPRA</b>	Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997
<b>LGU</b>	Local Government Unit
<b>MOA</b>	Memorandum of Agreement
<b>NCIP</b>	National Commission on Indigenous Peoples
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>NIPAS Act</b>	National Integrated Protected Areas System Act
<b>NSMNP</b>	Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park
<b>PAMB</b>	Protected Area Management Board
<b>PASAMOBA</b>	Palau-San Vicente Motorboat Operators
<b>PEPA</b>	Palau Environmental Protectors Association
<b>PEZA</b>	Philippine Economic Zone Authority
<b>PSA</b>	Philippine Statistics Authority
<b>SAMOBA</b>	San Ana Motorboat Association
<b>SEZ</b>	Special Economic Zone
<b>SMNP</b>	Sierra Madre Natural Park

## 1. Introduction

If you are a tourist looking for a leisure holiday, Palau Island can be your destination. Palau Island was rated as having one of the world's 100 best beaches by CNN in 2017 (CNN 2017). During my three months of ethnographic fieldwork, I walked along white beaches, snorkelled in coral reefs, hiked in mountains with deep vegetation and I enjoyed the sun, the wind, fresh fruits, and delicious fish. Because of its tourism potential, a corporation owned by the government has the mandate to develop the Island for large scale tourism. But how do the more than the 700 inhabitants anticipate these modifications? People on Palau Island are proud of being part of this Island, they are willing to show the waterfalls and the historical building of Cape Engaño. However, the possibility that a corporation owned by the government will be developing the Island for large scale tourism does not seem to correspond with the inhabitants' expectations about the future. This plan generates on the inhabitants a shared feeling of uncertainty towards the future. The Agta<sup>1</sup> and non-Agta fear being displaced<sup>2</sup> by losing access to the land and livelihoods, or even by being forced to move somewhere else.

As I will further explain in the next chapter, the number of actors involved in decisions about land ownership and access on Palau, make access to and management of land complex. While the main recognisable stakeholder is the state, non-state actors (tenants, landlords, transnational and national corporations, and NGOs) also influence the land distribution. This situation should be seen in the larger context of the development plans that the Philippines have carried out since the 1980s. Since then, the Philippines have undergone a process of urbanization at the expense of forested land. In this context, the national and local governments have agendas and rules that contradict the notion of a singular national policy, and that generate overlapping land claims. Research on indigenous people shows how inside this overlapping of claims, indigenous groups are often side-lined in important development decisions. Authors like Minter & Ranay (2005) have focused on how those mandates and non-state actors' interests impact on the indigenous Agta from the Sierra Madre Natural Park (SMNP). Despite the Agta owning some lands, they found that other actors involved in decision making do not fully respect the Agta's decisions about the future of those lands.

Inspired by Minter & Ranay (2005), among all the actors involved I focus on the indigenous Agta from Palau Island, who are positioning themselves in relation to the proposed Master Plan. As I will further describe in the next chapter, the indigenous Agta from Palau Island are still in the process of receiving the Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT), unlike the situation that Minter & Ranay describe. This title will make them owners of a portion of Palau Island and will theoretically give them more power to decide the future of the Island.

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<sup>1</sup> Like Brubaker (2012) explains for the category of "Muslim", Agta is a category of analysis and of (social, political, and religious) practice. Thus, when using the analytical category "Agta", I do not refer to a homogenous category, instead I use it as a fluid category that represents a heterogeneous group. Nowadays, 9,000 individuals belonging to 16 language groups live in the Sierra Madre Mountains and are recognized as Agta.

<sup>2</sup> The World Bank (2007: 106) defines displacement as the physical (loss or relocation of shelter) or economic resettlement (loss of livelihood or limitation of access to resources).

In this thesis I seek to further understand the concepts of indigeneity, land, and development, and how these constructions affect the Agta's interaction in the context of Palau Island. I propose the following research questions:

*How do indigenous Agta members construct their identity both individually and collectively, to negotiate their position in society?*

*How do Agta members from Palau Island anticipate the proposed development plans?*

*How do other actors engage with the future development of Palau Island?*

### **Academic and social relevance**

The first reason for conducting this research is due to the lack of publications focused on the Agta from Palau Island. From an anthropological perspective, the only research conducted is by Galang (2006, 2011: 34-36) who published two books based on a chronicle of expedition, with a team of anthropologists and political scientific, during the summers of 1994-1996.

The second reason is that available studies have mostly analysed the socio-economic and environmental impact once a development project is built. Instead, this thesis focuses on how development plans are negotiated among multiples actors (including government departments, inhabitants, NGOS and religious groups) before the actual project is built. Similar to Deprez's (2018) research on the anticipation of a roadbuilding project across the Sierra Madre by conducting research that focuses on the pre-construction phase of the project, we can learn how the modifications produced by the new constructions are shaped from their early beginning onwards.

The third reason is the importance of documenting the desires and fears of the inhabitants as they will potentially be most impacted by the consequences of the Master Plan. Authors like Higgins-Desbiolles (2009) argues that well-managed tourism can be beneficial for the community. However, as it happens on other Philippine islands where foreign investors and national elites are involved, these obtain the biggest economic benefits and communities lose power on managing tourism (See Coria & Calfucura 2012 for further details). Also, indigenous people sometimes become objectified and become part of this tourist attraction in remote and "undeveloped" islands. So, before this Master Plan takes place, it is important to document who the inhabitants are, and their desires for the future.

Therefore, the lack of information about the inhabitants of the island, the opportunity to record the inhabitants' desires and fears about a plan that has not yet been implemented, and the urgency of documenting the Agta's lives prior being affected by large scale tourism, demonstrate the importance of conducting research among the Agta from Palau Island.

### **Structure and objectives**

This thesis focuses on how Agta individuals narrate their individual and ethnic identity and position themselves in society. Moreover, it aims to understand how Agta members anticipate the development of Palau, especially concerning the Master Plan for modifying Palau Island for tourism purposes, and their hopes for the future. To provide a nuanced picture I analyse the

various legal mandates relating to conservation and development applied to the Island. To achieve these objectives, I structure this thesis as follows:

In chapter 2, I introduce the indigenous Agta, the main stakeholders and their claims, and the Master Plan.

In chapter 3, I describe the methods employed to gather the Agta's opinions and desires towards the future at the individual and collective levels. Because I want to understand how the Agta and Palau Island have been described historically, I explain the research I conducted on the archives. Finally, I reflect upon the ethics concerning the data gathering and content sharing of this thesis.

In chapter 4, the theoretical framework, I discuss the larger context of my thesis which is around the concept "development" and the inclusion and exclusion that development projects bring. Then, I discuss governmentality and policies to legitimise those powers of inclusion and exclusion. Finally, I focus on how the Agta's narratives on the future help to question the idea of a single line of development. Using the information provided in chapter 4, in chapter 5, I describe my research question and sub-questions.

In chapter 6, I introduce the socio-economical context of the Agta from Palau Island. In chapter 7 I answer how Agta members construct their identity as indigenous Agta to get the CADT recognition. I explain how the Agta, with external actors' support, employ exclusive governmentality to fight for their recognition as Indigenous Agta and land rights. In chapter 8, I argue that the construction of the Agta's ethnic identity is more than a political tool. The Agta identity is a tool for constructing a coherent feeling of belonging to a community. Nevertheless, I defend that paying attention to the individual level will allow the reader to see a heterogeneous community. An important element in framing the Agta's individual identity, resides in how the Agta position themselves in relation to development (Chapter 9). Because of the Agta's multiple interactions with other inhabitants and external actors, and the Agta's desires of being accepted into the Philippine community as Agta, I have looked at changes in the meaning and value of the land, (Chapter 10) and the role of education and tourism (Chapter 12) on changing the Agta's social and cultural values (Chapter 11). Land, education, and tourism (Chapter 13) represent key concepts that appear in most of my interviews and observations. Understanding the chapter 6 to 12 together will answer how Agta members anticipate the proposed development plans. Finally, I look at how those desires overlap with State actors' mandates (Chapter 14).



## 2. Contextualisation

Palaui is an island located in Northeast Luzon, about 1.25 km from the mainland. It belongs to Barangay<sup>3</sup> San Vicente, which is part of the municipality of Santa Ana in Cagayan Province, located in the Cagayan Valley/Region II (Figure 1). The island comprises approximately 3,850 hectares and a shoreline of 31 kilometres (Calicdan *et al.* 2015: 15-16).



Figure 1. Map of the Philippines and location of Palaui Island (Google maps and ArcGis).

The total number of inhabitants on Palaui Island in 2019 was 721 (Barangay San Vicente census 2019<sup>4</sup>). Most of the inhabitants of Palaui Island are Ilocanos, although there is a small percentage of Agta, Bisaya, Ibanang, and migrants from Camiguin Island. Most of the people live near the shoreline, only a small portion of families live in the interior part.

The main livelihood<sup>5</sup> is fishing, although inhabitants alternate fishing with working on rice fields outside and inside Palaui Island, temporary jobs in factories and formal jobs related to the Special Economic Zone<sup>6</sup> (SEZ) (i.e. hospitality jobs). Looking at the poverty rates

<sup>3</sup> The Barangay is the smallest political unit in the Philippines.

<sup>4</sup> I examined the census of 2019 at the Barangay. The information was on paper files, organised by family, with a summary statement of total official inhabitants.

<sup>5</sup> See chapter 6 for the description of the Agta members' livelihoods.

<sup>6</sup> The fact that Cagayan is a SEZ means that it has a separate customs territory and increased regulatory liberties e.g. it is allowed to build a casino, or investors pay less interests. SEZs are created with the aim of developing the

published by The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), there was an economic growth per family in the Municipality of Santa Ana from 2012 to 2015. The PSA (Mapa 2019) estimates that the percentage of Santa Ana households living below the poverty threshold fell from 20.6 in 2012 to 12.5 in 2015<sup>7</sup>. However, looking specifically at the Agta living on Palau Island, over 90% of the families live or are estimated to live in poverty conditions in 2019<sup>8</sup> (Barangay San Vicente census 2019).

On Palau Island, there are no paved roads, so inhabitants walk or take the boat between areas of the Island. There is no good phone signal, and there is no electricity or running water in the houses. There are small shops, but most of the inhabitants make a weekly shopping trip to the mainland. Although I describe the Agta's socio-cultural aspects in depth in chapter 6, I anticipate that the Agta<sup>9</sup> from Palau Island are sedentary, the youngest generation follow formal education, take part in tourism activities and in the case of Violeta and Julieta, female Agta adults worked in Manila for 8 years. In other words, Agta members from Palau Island have actively engaged with development since decades.

### **The indigenous Agta**

The Agta members are recognised as indigenous at the institutional level. The definition provided by the Cambridge Dictionary is *Existing naturally or having always lived in a place; native*. Furthermore, Li (2000: 151) argues that this category is not natural, but also is not simply created or imposed. *It is, rather, a positioning which draws upon historically sedimented practices, landscapes, and repertoires of meaning, and emerges through patterns of engagement and struggle* (ibid.).

Thus, I understand indigeneity as a socially constructed concept. Following in the footsteps of Balilla and colleagues (2013), Bryant (2000) and Major *et al.* (2018), I use the category “indigenous Agta” because they are considered as such, at the institutional level. These scholars and the Agta themselves recognize that they are the descendants of the first inhabitants of the archipelago arriving between 35,000 and 60,000 years ago (Bellwood 2005 in Minter *et al.* 2014).

From a historical perspective, the concept of indigeneity was encouraged once the Academia invented the term “tradition” (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983 in Dove 2006: 193). However, as Kymlicka (2005: 47) and Jansen & Perez Jimenez (2017: 35) argue, the origins of the concept of indigeneity are probably rooted in colonial times. Minter (2010: 62) describes how Agta

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area for tourism or industrial purposes, therefore they are business-oriented areas. In Santa Ana the government supported by Chinese investors built Sun City, an area that contains a Casino, a restaurant, and luxurious accommodations.

<sup>7</sup> “Official poverty statistics directly estimated by PSA from the Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES) is only available at the national, regional, provincial [level] and [for] highly urbanized cities. However, PSA also implements a project generating city and municipal level poverty estimates through small area estimation. Latest estimates from this Project, includes the 2015 poverty incidence among the population in Santa Ana, Cagayan” (PSA employee, personal communication 2020).

<sup>8</sup> I reviewed the information of the Agta families on the Barangay census and approximately 90% of families earn PhP 3,000 per month, which is below the poverty threshold of PhP 10, 481 per month (Bersales 2019).

<sup>9</sup> The Agta from NSNMP are hunter-gatherers with a *relatively mobile settlement pattern* (Minter 2017: 119).

people faced the Spanish colonisers in the mountains and resisted them. The colonisers compared the Agta with those that followed the Spanish commands and Christian religion, who were civilised and were first class citizens (Zaide 1990:5 in Minter 2010).

In 1898, the Americans bought the territories that belonged to the Spanish (ibid.). The Americans categorised the indigenous people as cultural minorities, pagan tribes, or hill tribes. Parallel to this, Americans introduced the concept of public land, and timber and mineral land over which the colonial state had the control. Concerning the cultural arrangements, most inhabitants followed the American model of civilisation, which influenced their clothes, food, arts, and education systems (Kelly 2001: 29; Persoon et al 2003: 63).

After independence in 1946, The Philippine government tried to integrate the indigenous communities by imposing national ideas on the need for development to compete on the world market. As Hall *et al.* (2011: 1) indicates, in this process of *deagrarianization*<sup>10</sup>, social movements, including the claiming of indigenous people for getting access to land, become stronger.

Currently, the Agta community, like other indigenous groups in the Philippines, is protected under the Indigenous People's Right Act of 1997 (IPRA law). This legislation promotes indigenous rights and recognises the "ancestral" lands of the Filipino Indigenous People (Rutten 2016: 8). In this context, the NCIP in the Philippines is supporting the Agta in obtaining the CADT. These are significant steps for the transformation of their status towards recognition as full citizens and owners of the land. Moreover, as Rutten (ibid.) argues the CADTs and the requirement for investors to gain the free and prior informed consent (FPIC) of indigenous communities now provide these communities with the legal instruments to keep unwelcome investors out.

Though in practise a CADT does not prevent unwelcome investments, at least it allows indigenous people to have some power of negotiation on terms of access or in a worse case the terms of the resettlement and compensation (ibid.: 9). On Palau Island, the Agta are in the process of getting this title. This process has been ongoing for 10 years, with supported from the Franciscan Order and currently also the Mabuwaya Foundation.

Looking at the corpus of literature on the Agta in the Philippines, as Minter (2010: 15) suggests past ethnographies (Headland 1985; Griffin 1991) have focused on the subordinate economic, political, and cultural position of the Agta in relation to farmers. In this context, past ethnographies argued that the Agta would become extinct soon. In contrast, Minter (2010: 15-16) introduces in her thesis the concept of *resilience* to refer to the ability of the Agta communities to deal with change. the Agta can cope with disturbance and reorganize, while keeping their structure and identity. Minter suggests that looking at the Agta through the lenses of resilience and adaptation allows us to see how the Agta have adapted to social and economic changes already for thousands of years. At that time, the Agta's ancestors changed from Negrito languages to Austronesian ones (Griffin 2002: 44 in Minter 2010: 17). Thus, following

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<sup>10</sup> Hall *et al.* (2011: 1) define *deagrarianization* as the process by which agriculture becomes progressively less central to national economies and to the livelihoods of people even in rural areas.

Minter's ideas on resilience, I describe how the Agta members from Palaui anticipate and engage with development. In the following section I provide more details about the stakeholders and the Master Plan, as this information will help the reader understand the magnitude of potential changes this development may bring for the inhabitants and the environment.

## Stakeholders

Since at least colonial times, external actors have seen potential for developing their plans on Palaui Island. Publications since 1831 (Buzeta, 1831: 434) describe the Agta Negritos living from Cape Engaño (the famous Cape on Palaui Island), along the Sierra Madre to Tabayas. From that moment until now, missionaries have come to Palaui Island, spreading the Catholic doctrine as the proper way of living. In books, Palaui Island has been characterised for its rich biodiversity, for the sources of iron (Ferrando 1871) and for being a strategic maritime point.



In 1944, the Japanese army fought against the Americans during the Battle of Cape Engaño (National Museum U.S. Navy n.d.). The Japanese used the lighthouse built by the Spaniards as a strategic place and residence. Based on the Agta's testimonies, the Japanese used their Agta ancestors as slaves. The Agta named a mountain on Palaui Island Pinatubo, in honour of a member who died at the hands of the Japanese army.



Below I describe several mandates that overlap. Some restrict the Agta's mobility, including not being allowed to hunt, gather certain resources from the forest or fish near the strictly protected sea. Currently, the overlapping of some other areas does not have a clear impact on the inhabitants, but before the Master Plan is implemented it is necessary to determine how to distribute the lands to allow the stakeholders to carry out their mandates.



For example, in 1967, the Philippine Navy Declared a Naval Base of 2000ha on Palaui Island (GOPH n.d.) by Presidential Proclamation No. 201. Those hectares are on the East and West sides of the island, overlapping with the Agta's school and houses. Additionally, the Municipal Government under the Republic Act No. 7160 (the local government code of 1991) has jurisdiction over the entire Municipality of Santa Ana, including Palaui Island (Calicdan *et al.* 2016: 24).

Besides that, in 1994, the DENR and the Philippine Navy declared Palaui Island a Marine Reserve of 7,415.46 ha. by Presidential Proclamation No. 447. In 2018, Palaui Island was declared as Protected Landscape and Seascape with an area of 8,048.57 ha. by Republic Act 11038 or Expanded National Integrated Protected Area System Act (ENIPAS Act) (Chan Robles 2019).



In 1995, by Republic Act No. 7992, the Cagayan Economic Zone Authority (CEZA) was established with jurisdiction over the entire municipality of Santa Ana, including Palaui Island. The CEZA, a government-owned corporation, is the proponent of the Master plan for the development of Palaui Island. As I will I explain further in the theoretical framework (Chapter 3), SEZs in the Philippines have been the cornerstone of development policies for some decades.



All the main stakeholders named in the history section are recognised in the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB). This board is composed of the Department of Environment and Natural Resource (DENR), the Provincial Government, Hukbond Dagat, the Philippine Coast Guard, the police, the Municipality of Santa Ana, the CEZA, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), the Palaui Environmental Protectors Associating (PEPA), the Palaui-San Vicente Motorboat Operators (PASAMOBBA), the San Ana Motorboat Association (SAMOBBA) the Barangay San Vicente, the Franciscan Order and three members of the Agta community (Van Weerd 2019).

What I want to show in this section is how these overlapping mandates make the legal situation on Palaui Island complicated and hinder making a consolidated decision concerning the plans for Palaui Island. The main overlapping of mandates are by the DENR that theoretically wants to protect the whole Palaui Island, CEZA that wants to develop the island as a tourist attraction, and the Agta-NCIP that are looking for the recognition of their ancestral land. Additionally, the Navy and the Coast Guard also aim to protect Palaui Island as a strategic point in the Philippines (ibid.).

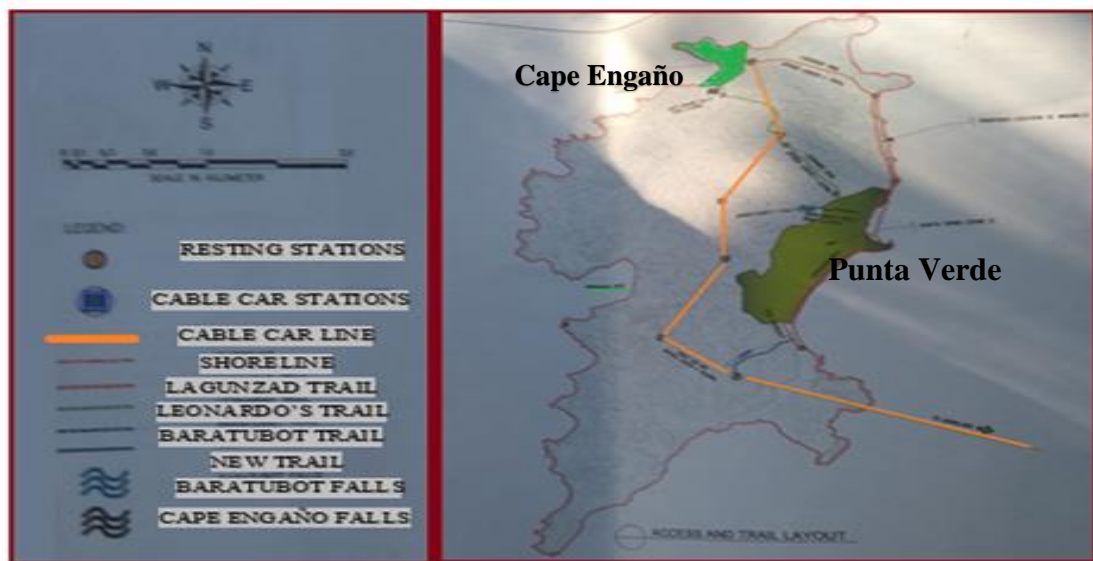
### **Master plan**

In 2013, the setting of the CBS reality TV show Survivor on Palaui Island increased the island's fame and its tourism potential. The anticipated rising number of tourists encouraged CEZA to propose the Master Plan to develop the island as a tourism enclave. In CEZA's words (2019) "The Master Plan aims to develop the entire Palaui Island into a self-sustaining industrial, commercial investment, a financial and tourism-recreational centre with sustainable retirement/residential areas" Additionally, two jetty ports will be constructed on Palaui Island to go with the development of a 200-hectare property, part of a concept to turn it into a tourism enclave (In van Weerd 2019; CEZA 2017).

The development of Palaui is part of the City Polaris that entails Palaui Island, Fuga Island, and some areas in San Vicente. This modern city is designed by the Italian company Mercurio

Design Lab and financed by Singapore-based LongRunn Capital Pte. Ltd. The plan comprises from resorts and golf courses and to further advance the status of the Cagayan Freeport as a premier game fishing destination. To do that, San Vicente will have a bigger wharf to allow cruise vessels to berth while also boosting facilities for inter-island services (Back End News 2019).

Furthermore, by looking at the proposal that CEZA presented to the Agta community in the PAMB meeting (Figure 2), the Plan entails three focus developments: first, the green area in the farther North point, that corresponds to Cape Engaño. In this area, CEZA plans to build a multipurpose hall with a native restaurant, archery area, indoor badminton court, cottages and natives huts, lodging house, orientation hall, viewing deck, first aid facility, beach volleyball court, public shower and toilets, and one of the two floating docks. Secondly, the green area that corresponds to Punta Verde, where it plans to build a road, multi-purpose hall or native restaurant, tennis or basketball or volleyball court, guest cottages, lodging house, spa, wellness, first aid facility, Barangay Centre, shop, secondary school, vegetable farm, evacuation centre with public restrooms, and the other floating dock. Third, the orange line that represents the cable car that will cross and has stations across the interior of Palaui Island. Furthermore, notice that the green area of Punta Verde, which is the focus of the development plans, is also where more than 700 people live (see chapter 14 for more details).



*Figure 2 Map of Palaui Island with the representation of the future cable car line (orange) and the two areas that will be developed for tourism purposes (green areas). This is a picture from the original map elaborated by CEZA (PAMB meeting, January 2020). Because of the low quality of the picture, I have rewritten the legend and repainted the cable car line and the area of Cape Engaño to make more visible in which areas CEZA will construct.*

In conclusion, I do not see Palaui Island as an isolated place affected by global forces. Instead, I agree with Moore (2004: 72-75) who argues that anthropologists should understand the concept of “global” as the integrate sum of all local systems. Thus, I understand Palaui Island as a place with multiple historical, regional, and global connections (For instance, inhabitants of Palaui Island promoting tourist places online) and where multiples actors are involved.



### 3. Methods and techniques of research

Postcolonial studies and indigenous studies strongly criticise the literature that portrays indigenous people as pristine cultures unaffected by time. Authors like Porsanger (2004: 112) claim that despite the attempts to break with the division between us (scholars) and others (indigenous groups), those relationships are still maintained.

However, other authors, like Atlalay (2006 in Jansen and Perez Jimenez 2017: 35), describe how anthropologists working along with the communities can contribute to visualising indigenous communities in their social and economic context. Consequently, anthropologists can work for a common benefit. I agree with Simonds and Christopher (2013: 2185) that decolonising investigation needs to be reflective and there is not a lot of guidance on how to do it. Similarly, Bourgois (2007: 288) suggests following a method in consonance with the ethic code. Inspired by Porsanger (2004: 112, 115), my priorities are to avoid objectivizing my informants and to conduct collaborative work with the Agta members.

#### Methods

As pointed out in the introduction, with this research I intend to analyse how stakeholder's mandates, laws, land conflicts, and infrastructures shape the modifications of Palaui Island. And how the Agta members experience and anticipates these transformations. To achieve this, I followed a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995: 110-111). This ethnography allows to create connections between people, conflicts, stories, objects, and sites. Likewise, it helped to reflect upon the impact of my presence during fieldwork and the categories I use on this thesis. Additionally, inspired by Bandyopadhyay's article (2018) I employed participatory drawing and photography because members of the community can express what they consider important but may have been irrelevant to the anthropologist.

Furthermore, as Luning argues (2019) ethnographic research does not start on the field location. Research comprises the first stages of preparation. This preparation includes the first contact, discussing objectives, or finding literature relevant for a study. Before going to the field location, I looked at Spanish archives online, and I went to the military archives in Madrid. These investigations allowed me to learn the reasons for the Spanish to go to Palaui Island, the name of the landmarks on Palaui Island and to read how official documents described the Agta during colonial times.

The original strategy to get familiar with Palaui Island was to create a map of Palaui Island collectively with my Agta informants. I expected that this map would help me to gain a first impression of my informants' space interaction. Once on Palaui Island, I realised that Palaui has one route that connects the neighbourhoods. Moreover, my informants' everyday routine took place along the shore and on the sea. Consequently, I postponed the creation of the map. Instead, during the second month, Robert (an elder of the Agta community), Regimar (my interpreter) and I sketched the whole Palaui Island, with the names and stories of those places. This map gave me insights into the Agta's stories and changes of the land's meaning.

The second planned activity consisted of creating a photography exhibition at the end of my fieldwork. My original intention was to incorporate a friend's pictures from Palaui Island in

1995<sup>11</sup>. Nevertheless, two primary events contributed to a modification in my original plans. First, because of the outbreak of COVID-19 epidemic, I left Palaui Island two weeks earlier than expected. The fast changes in the plan did not allow me to share what I learnt as I would have liked. Second, the Agta community and Sister Minnie have the plan of creating an Agta museum, incorporating pictures, videos, and material culture. I found it more appropriate to give my pictures and videos to the community to determine how to use them.

### Once on Palaui Island

Apart from the permits that the Mabuwaya Foundation already arranged for me, to research on Palaui Island there were several legal steps to follow. First, together with a representative of Mabuwaya we went to visit Sister Minnie from the Franciscan Order<sup>12</sup>. Once there, I explained my research and the Sister, as a gatekeeper of the Agta, asked me about my purpose and how my results could benefit the Agta. Once I got Sister Minnie's permission, we went to the Barangay Captain<sup>13</sup> to explain the purpose of my research and get the official authorisation.



Figure 3. Community meeting to explain my research.

I conducted most interviews through my interpreter, Regimar. Regimar is a fresh college graduate who translated the conversations. I worked with him for an average of 3 days per week. Working with an interpreter allowed me to gather information, that would not have been shared otherwise. My interpreter knew how to make my informants comfortable. This was in part because he was living near Palaui, already knew some of my informants, and was a potential future teacher for the Agta students.

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<sup>11</sup> Surprisingly, my friend, who is one of the few researchers that documented the Agta in Palaui Island, took pictures of three Agta members that are still alive.

<sup>12</sup> The Sisters have been working in the region for decades.

<sup>13</sup> The Barangay Captain is the elected leader of the Barangay.



### **Interview sample**

As I explain in the introduction, I want to look at the development of Palaui Island from the non-inhabitants and inhabitant's perspectives. I also want to understand how Agta and non-Agta use discourses on indigeneity to legitimise their claims. To achieve my aims, during the three months (January to March 2020) of ethnographic fieldwork, I conducted 52 interviews with Agta members<sup>14</sup>, 10 with non-Agta members and 5 with stakeholders (the Franciscan Order, the Navy, the PEPA, the Barangay, and the CEZA).

Moreover, this research aims to approach the Agta as a group shaped by heterogeneous individuals. This way, my research involved Agta members with no definite range of age or sex. Normally, I interviewed the elders and adult informants at their home. The interviews took an average of 60 to 90 minutes. With the youth, interviews were not a productive technique, as their answers were short and vague. Besides, some followed high school and arrived home late. And during the weekends, the interpreter was not available. Therefore, I joined the youth in informal settings. For example, when I joined young Agta men to play basketball, I had informal conversations with non-Agta players. Additionally, I used Facebook to get more nuance from interviews' answers.

Living for three months in a small place allowed me to meet the same informants every day. As most members allowed me to join them wherever they went, I did not intend to have key informants. But from diverse reasons, I developed a closer relationship with seven informants both male and female who became my key informants and who represent the whole age range.

Finally, related to the interviews with the Navy and the Barangay, I scheduled a meeting a few days in advance. With CEZA, I gave an official letter to an employee with whom I had an informal conversation. However, because of the COVID, the official interview with the CEZA employee never took place. Despite contacting CEZA via various methods, I did not receive a reply from an employee authorised or willing to conduct an interview. The same happened when I contacted the DENR.

### **Evolution of the interviews**

During the first week, I conducted individual structured interviews. I followed the Agta's advice for the order of the interviews: First, I interviewed the elders and leaders. Second, I conducted group interviews, and then I interviewed the adults and youths. While the answers from my first interviews were useful for getting an overview about the Agta's life as a community, once I got familiar with the questions and I earned more confidence, I changed the order and the way I asked the questions. At first, my questions were direct and broad (For example "What can you tell about your ancestors?"). However, my informants answered more fluently if I asked about stories, or if I started with recounting a situation when we were together. Moreover, I discovered that drawing helped to get past an initial "I do not know". This way, drawing contributed to establishing more fluent and informal conversations. To get more nuance, I joined my informants fishing and gathering octopus. Furthermore, I asked about

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<sup>14</sup> To keep the anonymity of my informants I used pseudonyms.

answers that at first, I ignored. For instance, when I was asking about their traditions and cultures, Violeta said she was unsure about the answer as she spent 10 years in Manila. At that time, I did not follow-up questions related to her period on the mainland.

Two main factors contribute to conducting more productive interviews. After a month, my interpreter and I learnt how to work as a team. Second, at the end of the fieldwork, my basic knowledge of Ilocano improved. I learned fast because most inhabitants do not speak English. Since I woke until I went to bed, the conversations were in Ilocano. And second, some words in Ilocano language are in Spanish. Because Spanish is my mother tongue, these common words allowed me to follow conversations. This understanding allowed me to engage in more conversations than when I started the fieldwork.

### **Reflecting upon my role**

Since the moment I stepped onto Palau Island, inhabitants saw me as the American tourist, working for Mabuwaya Foundation<sup>15</sup> and related to the Franciscan Order. While with time, this perception changed, I had a few encounters at the beginning of the fieldwork, that reminded me I was an outsider coming to Palau. Already on the second day of my fieldwork, when Jenny, the Mabuwaya's worker left, one non-Agta woman married to an Agta man asked for money for the trip to the mainland. At the beginning of my fieldwork, the price for the boat ride was established, but the amount she asked that time was significantly higher<sup>16</sup>. I did not pay that price, and instead I paid what Rosa, the teacher, paid for the boat ride. While I did not get the woman's appreciations, it worked to establish more clear boundaries about my role on Palau Island. Overall, my role as "Americana" was still present after the three months. However, based on the conversations we had; I was an Americana but not a tourist.

### **Data analysis**

The corpus of my analysis comprises transcriptions of interviews, notes regarding the participant observations, and my field diary. Parallel to this, I finished with a file full of pictures and videos, census, legal documents, and archival documents.

Regarding the interviews, I recorded (after asking my informants) with my phone and transcribed them. Only one person preferred not to be recorded. Also, sometimes my phone ran out of battery, so I took notes in my notebook. Moreover, not having electricity on the island implied that I took all my notes and transcribed my interviews with pen and paper.

For the data analysis, I used grounded theory<sup>17</sup> (Saldaña 2015) because it allowed me to include videos, interviews, focus groups, photos, diaries, images, existing text from documents and participant observation. So, during fieldwork, I did my first coding by circling keywords and I

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<sup>15</sup> It is the organization that supported me logistically during the fieldwork. This Foundation is also supporting the Agta in getting the CADT.

<sup>16</sup> One of my informants told me that they thought I was working for Mabuwaya, and that is normally the price that they pay.

<sup>17</sup> Saldaña (2015: 55) describes that the process includes several coding cycles that will result in the development of a theory.

tried to keep in mind my research questions. Also, I used memos and mind maps within the field and during the analysis.

Therefore, I used open coding, saturation, and axial coding to interconnect my selected categories and concepts. These categories helped me to build a story that connects with my theoretical framework generating a discursive set of theoretical propositions.

The reliability of my data is built upon the triangulation process with the data sources and methods. I asked comparable questions to my informants. I contrasted this information with non-Agta's and the Sisters' answers. Furthermore, I had those answers in mind while conducting participant observations and informal conversations. When something was uncertain, I asked in subsequent interviews. Additionally, my interpreter and a teacher from PAGASACA School helped me to give meaning to those situations I considered imprecise.

### **Ethics**

I ensured I got prior informed consent to conduct my research with the Agta by asking the elders' and the leader's permission during the first meeting. I explained in every interview the purpose of my research and the freedom to ask questions. I remarked that it was voluntary, and that they could end the interview when they wished.

The main ethical concern I encountered during fieldwork was how to thank my informants for the time they spent with me. For example, William and Robina spent the entire day with Regimar and me explaining the history of Palaui Island and walking to the major sites. Or when I joined them fishing, my lack of fishing skills was an impediment more than a help. Nevertheless, my informants welcomed me, asking nothing in return. In exchange for their food, knowledge, and time, I shared coffee and sugar.

I followed the ethical guide of the American Anthropological Association (2012) and Sillitoe's (2015) publication that investigates indigenous' representation and rights, policies, practices, and philosophies of contemporary Indigenous research ethics.

Finally, Berno (1996: 393) suggests conducting research that empowers and informs native peoples besides the researcher. One of my priorities in doing research was clarity. Moreover, I did not include parts of testimonies that are personal or that could risk the wellbeing of my informants. During the writing process I only shared my results with my supervisor and my field supervisor. While I will share this thesis publicly, I previously send the thesis to the Sisters to make sure I do not write information that could be harmful for my informants.

#### 4. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, I offer a theoretical discussion about the key concepts of my thesis: development, indigeneity, land, and the future. To some extent these concepts are interrelated, but I have analysed them separately to better understand their theoretical meanings and practical uses. First, I reflect upon the concept of development and the impact of development interventions on the people who are the subjects of these plans. I look at how development is constructed at two-levels: at the level of the policies and on the ground. In the section on the development on the ground, I focus on the value of education and tourism and how these concepts are seen as possible tools to improving the Agta's future. Next, I explain why an ethnography on the narratives about the future has helped me to engage with the Agta's hopes, aspirations and fears concerning a project that is yet to come on Palau Island.

##### Understanding development at the level of nation-states

From a historical perspective, ideas of development were central to the nineteenth-century social evolutionism (Banard & Spencer 2002: 234). Development was represented as linear progress. At the top of this line was the modern and civilised western man, and in the bottom was the traditional and savage form of being. As part of their civilisation mission, colonisers felt the responsibility to convert those "savages" to Catholicism for becoming decent individuals<sup>18</sup>. From the mid-twentieth century, development can be understood as a process of social and economic transformation provoked by economic growth. In this second sense, the term is related to the international projects of planned social change started post-World War II. During this period development projects and agencies, and, ultimately, development studies and development anthropology were encouraged. These plans focused on economic growth and improving living conditions in the 'Third World' countries or undeveloped countries<sup>19</sup> (ibid.).

Bullock (2017: 1, 8, 16, 187), who researches people's engagement with development on Siquijor, an island in the South of the Philippines, describes how development discourses (which contain a set of social classifications) are reproduced at the local levels and vary to a degree among social groups. These concepts generally reproduce the image of a linear social hierarchy, in which there are people that need to be changed through development (such as small farmers, landless peasants, or indigenous groups). Individuals have internalised ideas of modernisation, progress, and development, which become part of their lives and identity. Moreover, argues, these development plans give markers<sup>20</sup> for people to position and be recognised in society (ibid: 4, 7). Taylor (1997: 33) argues the recognition of one's identity is part of an internal dialogue between an individual and others who they see as capable of giving them recognition.

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<sup>18</sup> However, as established in chapter 2 the Agta rejected these forceful civilisation missions, and the Spanish colonisers remained considering them part of the bottom groups.

<sup>19</sup> In the 1990's those development plans shifted to being pro-poor.

<sup>20</sup> Bullock describes how many markers are material, but knowledge plays an important reference point on this cognitive map. Identification with certain types of knowledge allows people greater flexibility in negotiating their perceived position on the social hierarchy.

To exemplify these ideas, Ferguson (1999: 1-7) describes how in the context of the Zambian Copperbelt, development propelled by industrialisation brought the possibility of upgrading from second-class citizens (“the poor”) to first-class citizens (modern and civilised). With this upgrading, newly promised opportunities also come along (prosperity, leisure, travelling, consumption).

However, Bulloch (2017: 18) explains that for persons to climb the hierarchy there should be “others” in a lower position to whom to compare favourably. In this sense, development contributes to reconfiguring or support existing inequalities based on ethnicity, class, or gender. For example, Agta members who have been characterised as traditional and undeveloped, shift backwardness on their ancestors or, in the case of the younger generations on the elders. Therefore, my informants are perpetuating existing inequalities and social stratification. But Bullock (ibid.: 187) warn us that inequality is not simply created in the discourse, but rather that uneven distribution of resources is real and influence peoples’ quality of life.

In the Philippines, Rigg (2016: 3, 5-8) describes how a fast-economic growth produced a general improvement of the living conditions in terms of life expectancy, schooling, and health. However, this economic growth across Southeast Asian countries has left behind a fraction of individuals, sectors, and regions, exacerbating problems of inequality. Rigg (ibid.) describes how the ‘poor’ were, and still are, concentrated in rural areas. These rural areas in which cultural minorities tend to live, are characterised by lacking infrastructure<sup>21</sup> to reach those places. For instance, in Laos, development policy has focused on connecting people from the uplands with the mainstream by building roads. Similar to Rigg’s example, the construction of infrastructures on Palau Island, aims to connect this region with the “global” world through the attraction of tourists. Besides infrastructures projects, the Philippines also develop SEZs to achieve those goals. Specifically, the CEZA (2020) comparing itself with other powerful Economic Zones like Hong Kong, Singapore, or Malaysia, aims to develop the “Crypto Valley of Asia”, serving the FinTech and the crypto currency sector but also attracting International tourists through the (luxurious) Eco-tourism Park. Moreover, as Cross (2015) who researched the implementation of a SEZ in a coastal area in India describes, SEZs represent a particular idea of globalisation, in which all barriers to mobility of capital are removed (ibid.: 428). Cross (ibid.) explains how these Zones allow politicians to bring economic wealth to rural areas, through the creation of job opportunities and by bringing them inside the international market. To attract investors, Climaco Tadem (2016: 3-4), who focuses on the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) explains incentives offered for investment in these zones are private ownership of the SEZ, more flexible laws protecting workers’ rights and welfare, and overall reduced cost of doing business.

In the Philippines, since the approval of the PEZA under *The Special Economic Zone Act of 1995*, 326 SEZs operate in the country. SEZs serve for different and sometimes simultaneous purposes (like tourism, technology, crypto finance). Concerning tourism Neef (2019: 18) describes how during the last 50 years the Philippines has focused on encouraging tourism

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<sup>21</sup> Larkin (2013) also describes how infrastructures are linked to ideas of modernity and to the expectations of what they may bring in terms of prosperity.

projects (especially inside SEZs) as an engine for economic growth. However, while tourism can be beneficial for the economic growth of the region, it does so at the expense of the inhabitants. Neef (ibid.: 16) illustrates his point using Boracay Island and Hacienda Looc (Batangas province) as examples. For both cases, these tourism economic zones and larger-scale infrastructures pushed away the communities to the limits and rendered coastal areas and fishing grounds inaccessible to subsistence farmers and fisherfolks. Similarly, Climaco Tambdem (2016.: 6) references Cruz, Juliano, and La Viña on how this improvement is at the expense of *human rights abuses such as intimidation, forcible evictions, and killings*. Cross (2015: 433) similarly describes, that most inhabitants were displaced from their lands and excluded from the formal jobs. Finally, Climaco Tambden (2016: 6) proposes that to create SEZs that are sustainable and inclusive, the authorities responsible of the SEZ should consider and respect small farm holders' desires and the ancestral domains of indigenous people. Applying Rigg's ideas about the infrastructure and Cross and Climaco Tambden thoughts on SEZs to my research, I will look at how inhabitants and non-inhabitants actors (CEZA, Franciscan Order, Barangay San Vicente) anticipate a potential large infrastructure for tourism purposes within the SEZ.

Despite these development plans focused on the poor, Rigg suggests (2016: 6), these plans do more harm than good to the population. The problem lies in the fact that practitioners do not investigate the root cause of the poverty. Rigg uses the World Bank (2001 in ibid.: 7) definition of poverty; apart from the relation of lack of income, it is also related to being vulnerable to ill-health, being invisible in society, or lacking opportunity. Moreover, Rigg argues the definition of poverty is a social construction, additionally there is no singular way of being poor. As the poor groups are heterogeneous, they should not be treated uniformly.

### **Dimensions of poverty**

Rigg (2016: 9-10) introduces four kinds of poverty that are useful to understanding the situation of Palau Island. Case 1 is the poverty related to the basic needs, so the ones that refer to water, food, or a place to sleep. Case 2 refers to the poverty created by unequal distribution of growth.

Case 3 refers to those people that are poor because of development plans. Because they live in lands that the state wants to develop, the region may be richer in absolute terms but at expenses of creating dependency of the groups living there. One of the reasons is that indigenous people live on lands rich in natural resources: which is translated as possibilities for developing mining activities. In other cases, like on Palau, pristine land in remote locations is designated for tourism purposes. In most cases, Kymlicka (2005: 52-53) describes that these development plans mainly enrich the elite, who justify the extraction of indigenous resources and the lack of indigenous rights and autonomy with increasing prosperity of a region or the country. Finally, case 4 corresponds to the invisible poor. Those who do not have political representation. Concerning Palau Island, I refer to those domestic migrants that legally do not own any land and are not tenured migrants, because they did not live on Palau Island 5 years before the establishment of the Protected Area. Because they lack the tools to secure living rights on their current land, they are at a disadvantage when negotiating future conditions.

Rigg (2016: 11) describes how in Southeast Asia countries have focused on reducing the type 1 poverty. Still, the challenges that lie in solving of type 3 and 4 poverty are often deliberately overlooked. In the next section, I discuss the role of the land in development programs.

**What does development bring? In- and exclusion of people, land and resources.**

Hall and his colleagues (2011: 4) describe how nation-states, tend to urbanise rural areas following the idea of development. Consequently, land becomes a precious possession because it is key to carrying out those development plans. In this context, the authors introduce the concept of exclusion. Exclusion is a condition by which people are prevented from benefitting from things. The opposite of exclusion is access to those resources (ibid.: 7). Moreover, because the land is limited, all kinds of land use and access require exclusion of some kind. In other words, development projects are a coin with two sides. With every opportunity of inclusion, new risks of exclusion also come long.

These insights are relevant for Palau, where such in- and exclusions are already part of the local landscape. The government has declared the island a protected conservation area, excluding the inhabitants from access to resources such as fishing near the shore, gathering rattan, or hunting. Simultaneously, the Agta being categorized as indigenous people, have more access to resources than non-Agta. For example, on the strictly protected area the Agta can collect certain kinds of wood that for non-Agta are forbidden.

Jodha (2005) defends that when referring to resource exclusion, the state tends to declare natural resources, like forest and minerals, as national property and excludes the local communities. Furthermore, non-state actors such as mining companies can also influence decisions taken concerning land access and exclusion (Hall *et al.* 2011: 194).

The ideas above illustrate what Rigg (2016: 199), argues namely that all development is political. Whether to focus on financing a small-scale tourism project, or welcoming foreign investment, all these decisions represent a political balancing of interests. In this sense, all actors are competing for attention and funding. These insights are relevant for Palau Island where, as explained in the introduction multiple actors each with their own government mandates for development, compete for access to land and resources of the SEZ. The question “who can own, access, manage and exploit the land” is a highly political one in the context of development. In the following sections, I will explain how state and non-state actors (tenants, corporations, investors) legitimise access to the land and how this potentially excludes indigenous groups and non-tenured migrants.

**Governmentality, indigeneity, and politics of recognition.**

Governmentality refers to ways to organize power and governing. According to Ghosh (2006), there are two kinds of politics of governmentality: exclusive and incorporative governmentality.

*Exclusive governmentality*

Exclusive governmentality is based on the principle of exclusion (Ghosh 2006: 508). For example, the Agta members use the category of indigenous to be recognized under the IPRA

and to obtain the CADT. Thus, exclusive governmentality is used by indigenous and other stakeholders to legitimise land access.

Both exclusive and incorporative governmentality are based on the principle of essentialism. Essentialism is a type of reductionism that focuses on certain aspect(s) of individuals identities. Individuals are seen inherently in a specific way and unable to change through social processes (Bell 2013). Spivak (1987 in Morton 2003: 75) argues that essentialist categories should be questioned. But simultaneously, these categories are necessary to give a sense of the social and political world. In the context of feminist and postcolonial theory, Spivak introduces the concept of *strategic essentialism* (1987: 205 in *ibid.*). The author argues that the use of this strategy of self-reductionism by minority groups can be useful to affirm a political identity. Thus, strategic essentialism can be useful for securing a way of living, self-determination, and access to basic human rights. In exploring this issue, Balilla *et al.* (2013) explain that when indigenous people become a minority, they often desire to preserve their social and economic systems and cosmology. Therefore, based on the ‘otherness’ of the indigenous peoples, as Li (2010: 395) describes, indigenous groups demand to protect their culture attached to an inalienable land. In other words, this strategic essentialism for ‘self-actualization’ becomes even stronger if the recognition of ancestral land or the right over those resources can influence their quality of life. But Spivak remarks that this strategy is useful as long as this identity does not get fixed as an essential category by dominant forces (Spivak 1993: 4 in *ibid.*).

Likewise, international companies and states also essentialise indigenous communities (for being in the process of becoming civilised) to legitimise these extractions. During my fieldwork, some state employees told me that “the Agta should learn how to behave as modern citizens. They should copy the behaviour of the tourists coming to the Island”. This way, local governments create or maintain the image of indigenous people as primitive, incapable, or irrational. Similarly, conservation programs tend to revitalise the past of indigenous people as hunter-gatherers, or/and, to describe them as inherently in harmony with the environment, to encourage conservation plans for the “global” future. In this matter, conserving culture implies protecting the natural environment. Consequently, the idea of indigenous people as protectors of the natural environment is a legitimisation for having access to land (Hall *et al.* 2011: 225).

As Rutler argues (2017: 137), those outsiders have long essentialised indigenous groups as lacking the legal personality to legitimise the access to lands and have used techniques of domination to ensure their control<sup>22</sup>. If indigenous people lose the control over their ancestral land, this could imply the loss of a way of life and a culture (which may be a major source of identity and pride) and the risk of being assimilated into the lowest rungs of mainstream society (Eder 1987; Macdonald 1995 in Rutler 2017: 137).

### *Incorporative governmentality*

In addition to exclusive governmentality, Ghosh (2006: 508) distinguishes ‘incorporative governmentality’ based on ethnic inclusion. This kind of governmentality aims to include those

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<sup>22</sup> These techniques are used by a group of people or single individuals to maintain privileges or delegitimise other voices (The Centre for Gender Equality 2009: 1).



ethnic groups into the mainstream society through schooling, health programs or micro-loans. However, it aims to include them while highlighting those ethnic differences (Gosh 2006: 509). For example, The Franciscan Sisters support including the Agta members into the National Health System, by removing hospital fees for Agta individuals.

The ideas developed above should illustrate how state and non-state actors employ exclusive and inclusive governmentality to organize their power on decisions concerning land, resources, and people. In the following section, I discuss how government and non-state actors (corporation, national elites, religious groups) legitimise those power decisions.

### **Policy of development**

Mosse and Lewis (2006: 13) suggest focusing on how development plans materialise through the translating of interests generating a net of supporters, because it is in this interaction among the different actors (members of the community, religious groups, NGOs, investors...) that the actual development takes place. In this context, Mosse (2004: 651) describes how policies of development bring together stakeholders with overlapping mandates and plans for the future. Mosse (2004: 639) clarifies that to legitimise development, actors focus on getting the theory of the policy right, not the eventual outcome. These overlapping mandates and power-relations enable stakeholders at various levels to execute their powers and exclude less powerful groups (indigenous groups) from decisions about development planning (Hall *et al.* 2011: 12). Minter and her colleagues' (2014) research exemplify this issue. In the Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park, there is a common policy, through which all actors involved in deciding on the development of the Park have the right to intervene. Among these actors are the Agta who have been entitled the CADT, have the right of intervening with one-third of the seats. However, the Agta's participation in these decisions is limited for several reasons. They do not have the financial means to arrive to the meetings. If the meeting changes location or date, the Agta do not have a way to know about those modifications. Finally, even though the Agta participate in the meetings, their decisions have been ignored.

Bringing back the ideas of Mosse, Mosse and Lewis, Hall and colleagues, and Minter *et al.*, I want to analyse the process of translating interests to create a net of supporters that will contribute to or oppose the construction of the Master Plan. Because mandates on Palau Island overlap, I want to focus on the power-relations of the actors involved. Furthermore, following Mosse and Lewis I want to focus on how the inhabitants are anticipating the construction and actively negotiating the Master Plan conditions. Thus, in the following section, I discuss how development is understood in practice and how people engage with those development plans.

### **Development on the ground**

The meaning of development depends on individuals understanding and expectations of it. Therefore, Mosse (2004) describes how the concept of development changes between the intended policies and the people that experience it. In this context, authors like Rigg (2016: 202) or Bulloch (2017: 203) encourage anthropologist to focus on analysing how inhabitants actively engage with development projects.

Bulloch (2017: 192) narrates how discourses of development change depending on the level of comparison. At the international level, Siquijodnon see North America as the most developed place in the world, and they feel inferior towards American people and perceive their poverty as a moral failure. At the national level they have been categorised as superstitious or traditional and therefore as backwards. At the local level, Siquijodnon tend to deny those assumptions and displace backwardness onto the people from the mountains. However, this does not imply that people avoid visiting shamans, sometimes ironically with the express goal of seeking improvement of their socio-economic status (ibid: 195). Thus, Siquijodnon engagement with development is ambiguous.

These insights are important because as part of the development plans, the Philippine government has also invested in social areas: improvements on education, healthcare, or recognition of human rights, among others. Concerning these reforms, also presented as means for improving indigenous peoples' lives, two major topics appear in the conversations during my fieldwork: the importance of education and tourism.

### *Education*

The Philippines, as part of the ideas of national development, has invested in education. Schooling affects people's opinions about the jobs that they value, or like my informants establish what are "decent" jobs. As Levinson and Holland (1996) and Naafs and Skelton (2018) describe, this increase in the number of individuals following formal education presents a duality: on the one hand, education offers knowledge, skills, and ideas about citizenship. Education often also raises people's hopes that their skills and diplomas will enable them to get a job, achieve social mobility and promises a future never imagined, a pathway to "escape" from the current situation or replicate or surpass their parents' achievements. On the other hand, it presents uncertainty towards achieving those desired futures.

### *Tourism*

Hinch and Butler explain (1996: 4-6) that the western-based economical way of thinking promotes the idea that indigenous people could benefit from tourism and solve their challenges. This is because tourism could give independence and empowerment through the creation of job opportunities and the possibility of economic growth.

In Palau, the CEZA is working along with the PEPA, which is responsible for ecotourism projects that theoretically promote the inclusion of the different indigenous groups to improve their economic situation, while protecting the environment. This is in line with the belief that well-managed ecotourism is a sustainable activity that respects the community's values (Hinch and Butler 1996). Another belief is that increasing participation of indigenous people in ecotourism will help to spread and understand indigenous livelihood and therefore result in a more balanced relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

In these discussions, it is important to introduce the concept of tribal slot, originated by Li (2000: 149, 151) and described by Tsing (2007) as tribal allegories. These tribal allegories relate to indigenous' cultural distinction, ecological wisdom, and an intimate relationship with nature. This essential category fixates those indigenous groups into ecotourism, as indigenous

people are not deemed to be the skilled workers that investors or states want for positions in more luxurious tourism projects. On Palau Island, CEZA proposes a Master Plan under the characterisation of an ecotourism Park but through which it plans to attract a more luxurious public. The Agta members (from elders to younger individuals) describe that while they would not mind taking part in those potential new tourism jobs, they believe that they are not skilled enough and that CEZA will bring workers from outside.

Instead, environmental oversight is one of the most powerful tools for contemporary indigenous activism as Yeh (2007:72) who researches the idea of Tibetans as eco-friendly argues. As Tsing (2007) contends, coordinating indigenous people's involvement around problems of environmental destruction provides alternatives for helping indigenous people to find support with environmental associations.

Davidov (2013: 205) has researched the impact of eco-tourism in indigenous communities in Ecuador. Davidov argues that ecotourism is also a way for tourists to live out fantasies of living and salvaging the past. Tourists believe they are supporting impeding the loss of species and habitats and with them the loss of traditional cultures (which for Westerners means communities of innocent people living in environmental harmony and facing extinction).

Finally, authors like Turner and Ash (1975 in Hinch and Butler 1996: 6) argue that the tourism business is mostly dominated by outsiders who benefit from it. In my research, I do not look to analyse if the impact on tourism on Palau Island is positive or negative. Instead, my aim is to understand the ideas that my informants shared about eco-tourism on Palau Island and the potential large-scale (eco) tourism Park. Moreover, by comparing the mandates of the multiple actors with Agta member's desires, I reflect about the potential ideas of future and development.

### **Open-ended futures**

Needless to say, that the idea of a linear progress and development that the Philippines aspires is a worldwide vision. Urbanization represents a teleological process, a progression to a known end point materialised by the Western industrial society (ibid.: 5). Ferguson (1999: 5) studied how in the mid-1960s the Copperbelt brought Zambian inhabitants the opportunity to leave their status of second-class citizens, to be considered modern and urban citizens. However, during an economic crisis produced by the decreased value of copper in the 1980s, broken dreams and uncertain futures replaced the desired modern futures (ibid.:13). Following these ideas, Pels (2015:782) and Bryant & Knight (2019: 3, 195-196) argue that expectations of progress towards a known single future should be questioned as these ends may nevertheless be uncertain and open-ended. In fact, infinite new potential forms may be actualised within a time-space (Pels 2015: 788).

In this context Bryant & Knight (2019) introduce the concept of orientations to talk about different depth of time and sentiments linked to time dimensions: anticipation, speculation, potentiality, hope, and destiny are the main orientations that will affect our actions in the present. They illustrate how "orientations" help distance from linear development and thus from the dichotomy modern-traditional that put the "other" in a different time and dimension (ibid.: 17; Pels 2015). Moreover, looking from an ethnographic angle to the concept of

orientations will help us reflect upon relationships between the future and actions, including the act of imagining the future.

Building on this literature about anticipation and the future, I seek to analyse my informants' narratives from an orientation perspective to reflect upon how they imagine the future (individually and collectively), how different groups of Agta members position themselves towards the Master Plan and the evolution of the Island in general, and how as a community they are acting upon that. Likewise, I want to see how tradition and modernity are reinvented among the inhabitants, and also reflect on the anticipation that the potential futures bring.

## 5. Research questions

As mentioned before, Palaui Island is and has been the target of development plans by many actors. As Mosse and Lewis discuss (2006), for development projects where different stakeholders are involved, anthropologists should concentrate on the active role of the community in negotiating those plans. That is why I focus my attention on the Agta, who have been trying to secure their belonging to and ownership of a portion of Palaui Island for at least 10 years. Therefore, I question:

*How do indigenous Agta members construct their identity both individually and collectively, to negotiate their position in society?*

Because I am interested in how the Agta perceive their future, at a moment in which there are large scale development plans for Palaui Island, I propose:

*How do Agta members from Palaui Island anticipate the proposed development plans?*

To provide a nuanced picture about how non-Agta inhabitants and State actors imagine and/or plan the future development of Palau Island, I question:

*How do non-Agta actors anticipate the future development of Palaui Island?*

## 6. The Agta members from Palaui Island

With this chapter I seek to describe the key socio-economic aspects of the Agta community<sup>23</sup>. I combine this background information with the interviews and the theoretical framework, to arrive to my final interpretations and conclusions (Chapter 7-13) about Agta individuals identity construction and engagement with development.

### Socio-economic aspects

Based on the official census of 2019 (Franciscan Apostolic Census, 2019), 150 Agta are living on the island. From which (Figure 3), almost half (47%) of the population are children. In contrast, the percentage of elderly people is low (8%). The representation of women and men is very equal in all the age groups except among the children. With the children, the number of boys (37 members) almost doubles the number of girls (20 members).

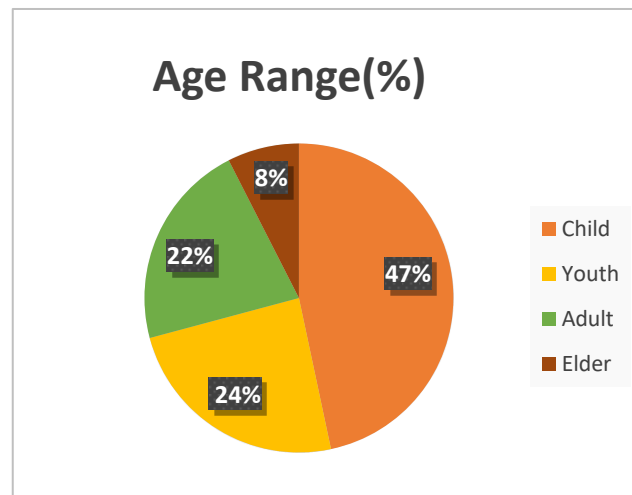


Figure 4 Representation of children, youth, adult, and elders from the Agta population from Palaui Island. I split the age categories inspired by Ritchie and Roser (2019), I divide among elders (>60 years old), adults (30-60 years old), youth/young adults (15-30 years old) and children (1-15 years old).

### Distribution on the island

In the past, the Agta lived scattered around the island. Based on the Sisters' advice, the Agta members currently live in four main areas: The group that lives in Punta Verde, the one that lives in the orphanage one aggregation far from the rest of the group, and Siwangag, which is used as a secondary residence during winter and main residence during summer.

<sup>23</sup> The description of the Agta's socio-economic activities is based on the data gathered during my fieldwork.

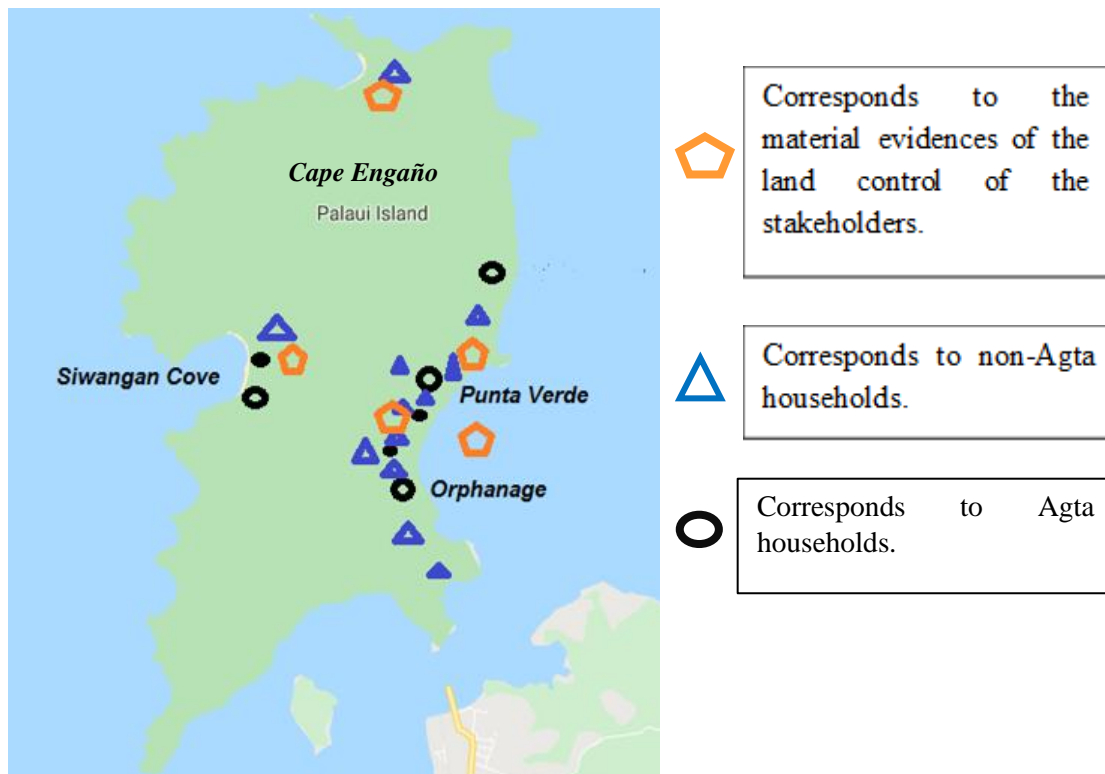


Figure 5 Distribution of households and landmarks on Palaui Island.

In the nucleus of Punta Verde, the Franciscan Order founded the School for the Agta with a park, the feeding house, and the teacher's house. The Agta do not use the traditional houses called toclon. Instead, the members live in wooden houses or newly made cement houses. These new houses are only built in Punta Verde and are part of a project organised by the Sisters. Apart from the houses, some families have big solar panels that allow them to charge batteries, to have light during the night, and to charge cell phones, radios or sometimes speakers, TVs, or video players. Besides the houses in Punta Verde, Agta houses in The Orphanage are a mix of wooden structures and houses made of cement. The families living in the Orphanage are kin related and have strong relationships with the members of that area. Individuals from the Orphanage argue that the members in Punta Verde create more trouble or are noisier.

### Agta association

The Agta members encouraged by the Franciscan Sisters have created the Agta association at the time of the filming of the Survivor reality series. The compensation given by the Survivor's direction in return for using certain areas, was used as common funding for the organization. For example, when an Agta member needs to attend a training or a meeting somewhere outside Palaui Island they can use the association's money for the transportation costs. Moreover, the members appointed an official group of elders and leaders. The leaders were chosen by elections and the elders were assigned because of their age. Furthermore, members of the Agta association are descendants of Agta people and include their partners, who are non-Agta, and their children.

### **Intermarriage**

Around 60 years ago the Agta from Palaui Island mainly married other Agta from nearby towns. However, the next generations did not follow this pattern and married non-Agta. Officially, the children of these mixed marriages are recognized as Agta. However, during the interview, Agta members refer to the concept of pure-blooded Agta and half-half. Pure-blooded Agta are those members both whose parents are Agta. In contrast, the children from a mixed marriage are called halo-halo, which means a mix in Ilocano language. These distinctions influence the daily interactions, as the children from intermarriage go to an Agta only school. Other times, as we will see in the section of livelihood, these distinctions prove trivial as Agta and Ilocano go fishing, drinking, or playing basketball together.

### **Religious practices**

Overall, I observed that Agta members simultaneously hold indigenous and Catholic beliefs, although as I will further explain my informant's beliefs vary upon their age and life history. Based on the Franciscan Apostolic Centre census (2019), most Agta members are Catholic, although this does not imply that all members are baptised, or that all the couples are married. Based on the observations and interviews, elders, and some adults practice alai before going fishing and gathering honey. Also, the Agta describe that there are two kinds of spirits: the ones after a person dies and the spirits of nature. Moreover, when a person dies, there are certain patterns to follow: for instance, if the person dies fishing, the family will not eat the fish that person was catching for a year.

Moreover, for at least 50 years Agta and non-Agta have used the cemetery from Palaui Island, also called Campo Santo to bury their deceased. The distribution of the Campo Santo is divided among Agta and Ilocano. However, I did not get any straightforward answer related to the reasons for the distribution. I believe that this distribution is not conscious. Instead, I think this distribution corresponds to the Christian tradition of burying family members together. E.g. an Ilocano family would bury their deceased on the west side of the cemetery and the Agta on the east side. Additionally, there are stories about witches and evil spirits shared among Agta and non-Agta.

### **Livelihood**

The main livelihood is fishing, although this activity is complementary with gathering honey from March to June, and tourist activities such as being a tour guide or selling souvenirs. This way, Agta members depend on jobs that are seasonal and attached to the land.

Tourism is important in the Agta's income. In the case of Agta women that work as tour guides, they combine it with fishing. In the case of the non-Agta women married to an Agta man, they do not often go gathering shells or octopus. Instead, two of them create souvenirs and another two are tour guides. In the case of Agta men, only young men work as tour guides. The adult and elder men focus on fishing, and in peak seasons work for PASAMOBBA. Therefore, I observed that elders and most adults do not participate in the tourists' activities. It is the Agta young-adults (mostly female) and non-Agta females who take part on those activities. In



chapter 12, I will discuss the economic, social, and moral consequences that those tourists' activities bring to Agta individuals.

Overall, I observed, despite some of my informants saying the opposite, that there is a gender division of labour among the Agta:

Around 80% of men work as fishermen. One member is a Security Guard, one other as a teacher, other individual works as a Tour Guide and three members in PASAMOBBA association. Among women, including the youth (but excluding the students) and the adults, 80% are housewives. Parallel to this task, women take care of their pigs, work as tour guides or in the catering of the Eco-Village and make and sell souvenirs. While referring to fishing among women, only the descendants of Agta families practice fishing. Instead, women from Ilocano or Bisaya origin do not take part in these activities.

Moreover, there is gender difference concerning fishing technique: Agta women go fishing in the morning or at night during low tide. They gather shells, maratanga, small fishes, and octopus. Depending on the personal circumstances, the area where they live and if they have a motorboat, they sell the marine resources to a buyer from Palaui Island or Santa Ana. The fishing during low tide can be done alone, although usually, I saw groups practising it. Instead, fishing with a net is a dominantly male activity. They use a net and propulsor to dive. This fishing technique requires the use of a motorboat. Some Agta own one, although if they do not own one, they join someone that has one.

The groups that go fishing during low tide are normally made up of members of the Agta community. Instead, the fishing with nets involves more heterogeneous groups with both Agta and non-Agta members. Based on observations, these fishing teams are created among neighbourhoods. For instance, a person living in Punta Verde will go fishing with the neighbours from Punta Verde. After fishing, some fishes will be used for their consumption and others shared or sold to the neighbours. Moreover, the fishermen will sell a proportional amount in the market and, the profit will be shared among these fishermen.

Related to hunting, Agta members narrate that in the past they used to hunt deer, wild boar, and monkeys. At that time, hunting was not gender-based but narratives describe, how with time it became male-dominant activity. However, they explained that because of the DENR regulations they were forced to stop hunting<sup>24</sup>.

Overall, the livelihood practices differ among gender and age. Normally, men join other men in fishing. If an Agta family does not own a boat or have friends with one, women and men go together to catch marine resources. This gender division is also promoted by the training programs: crafting and selling souvenirs was part of the CEZA female-oriented training, and during the Medical Mission by the Franciscan Order only women received the basic health care course.

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<sup>24</sup> Based on the IPRA law, Agta members are allowed to hunt as long as it is part of their cultural practices and does not include hunting protected animals (Van Weerd, personal communication, 2020).

## Education

Most elders did not follow high school. From the adults, none of them finished high school. The reasons are diverse: they got married at the age of 14, they had family issues, or they lacked money. For these reasons, some women went to work in Manila at an early age. For the youth, a larger percentage of the members began high school, although the majority stopped due economic problems, discrimination, or early marriage and pregnancy. Out of 19 young people, only three finished high school, one finished the course on the Alternative Learning System, and one is following her last year of high school. Out of those five individuals, only two finished a college degree. One of them is working on Palaui Island and the other member is working outside the Island. From the group of children, the majority have joined formal education and are part of the PAGASACA School. At the end of this school year, students following the last year of school will be graduating.

### *PAGASACA*

Palaui Island has two schools, the public school and the PAGASACA School. This school managed by the Franciscan Sisters was created for two crucial reasons: at the public school, Agta children faced verbal discrimination by other children about their black skin or curly hair. Moreover, the public school did not incorporate indigenous knowledge that includes Dupanangan language<sup>25</sup>, and what my Agta informants refer as the Agta ancestors' traditions (how they fished, hunted, or danced). To design a safe space for Agta members, the Franciscan Order began this school. The Sisters have built the school pillars on a mix of the National Curriculum adapted to the Agta's family conditions from Palaui Island. The educational program includes Agta curricula designed on Agta elders' advice. This school prepares the Agta children for the high school, St. Anthony's college, founded by the Sisters. The Plan is that children following high school on the mainland will be living in Franciscan Order buildings.

A typical morning in PAGASACA School starts with the raising the National flag and singing the National anthem. Later, the teachers look at the cleanness of the nails and they will start the classes. The program includes Mathematics, Ilocano, Dupanangan (an Agta language) and Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSPS) this includes Dupanangan language, and Agta cultural practices, such as dancing or learning how Agta traditionally, fished, or gathered honey. Outside the school, children can play in a playground inspired on how their Agta ancestors lived. Apart from the Agta association and school, the Franciscan Order has also supported two other activities:

### *The Agta day*

During this day, the Agta from Palaui Island and the Agta from Turut and Dumasag<sup>26</sup> spend the day together. They practice activities inspired by the Agta thematic. For example, last year the

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<sup>25</sup> Dupanangan is an endangered language spoken by 1, 4000 semi-nomadic hunter gatherers Agta groups (Robison 2011: 1). On Palaui only the elders and around 50% of the Agta adults know how to speak it.

<sup>26</sup> Turut and Dumasag correspond to places where two Agta communities live, with whom the Franciscan Order keeps good relationships. In Turut and Dumasag, the Order coordinates similar plans to the ones on Palaui Island.

Sisters organised a competition to see which ones of the teams could survive for a day employing the resources of nature (like fishing, gathering rattan or fruits). Moreover, during Christmas day, the three communities meet again. Last year on that day, Agta children dressed as their Agta ancestors and recreated the nativity scene.

### *The Agta museum*

Agta members aspire to keep a record of their traditions. Together with the Sisters' and Mabuwaya's support, they are building a museum that will contain the Agta's cultural representations based on the reconstruction of how the Agta's ancestors were. In February 2020, the Agta members and the Sisters met to discuss what to include in the museum. The Sisters asked the Agta members what they thought represented Agta culture. Elders and younger members made a list that consists of the traditional clothes (bidang and badang), the pana for fishing or the herbal medicines among other items. To create the materials exposed in the museum, the Sisters appointed several members from all range of age and gender to reconstruct the material culture. This museum is being constructed on one side of the trail that tourists take to visit one famous waterfall and hike to Cape Engaño.

The materialization of the Agta culture through the school, Agta day and museum evidence Agta engagement with the development of Palau Island. As I will further explain in the next chapter, non-Agta actors (mainly the Franciscan Order and Mabuwaya Foundation) support and encourage those initiatives. To legitimise those initiatives, these actors employ exclusive governmentality of the Agta members as indigenous.

## 7. The concept “Agta” through a governmentality lens.

In this chapter, I discuss how Agta members use the labelling as indigenous to obtain exclusive governmentality and secure their place on Palaui Island. As explained in the introduction, the IPRA law aims to protect the well-being of indigenous people. Well-being means encouraging self-determination and the assurance of land and resources through the recognition of the CADT. The IPRA is a law based on the principle of exclusive governmentality. This means that the Agta members can get recognition of communal ownership of their lands because the government recognises them as indigenous.



Figure 6. Leader's representation of the Agta (The Native) being attacked with a sword by the "power".

Notice here that I focused my research on stepping away from the category of Agta as a static homogeneous community. However, for the first weeks on the field I found it difficult to not think about “the Agta” as a community, rather than “the Agta members” of an heterogeneous community. This is because during individual and collective interviews, I mainly heard from young and old Agta

“We are the Agta from Palaui Island”, “We have the right of staying on Palaui Island because it is where our ancestors were born and die”. I observed that the Agta members have internalized a homogenous discourse of what it means to be “indigenous Agta”, a category that most of my informants claim differs from non-Agta.

In chapter 8, I explain that following the Agta members in their daily activities allowed me to obtain a more nuanced view between the claims “I am Agta” and “you are not Agta”. Bringing back what I discuss in the introduction, Balilla *et al.* (2013) explain that when indigenous people become a minority, they often desire to preserve their social and economic systems and cosmology which as Li (2010: 395) describes, are attached to an inalienable land. In other words, this strategic essentialism for ‘self-actualization’ becomes even stronger if the recognition of ancestral land or the right over those resources can influence their quality of life. Moreover, these authors argue that external actors such as religious groups or NGOs support indigenous groups on those claims. I argue that those external actors in Palaui Island play a key role in influencing the Agta members’ homogeneous and political answer (using words like rights, ancestral land, or claims). To clarify my point, I focus on the role of the Franciscan Order and the Mabuwaya Foundation on influencing Agta members’ discourses. Both actors

have in common that the discourse they promote about the Agta is based on exclusive governmentality. This means that they follow the message stated on the IPRA law to guarantee Agta's members wellbeing, to give them power in decisions taken about themselves and Palau Island. This way, these actors promote the Agta as indigenous and traditional (Franciscan Order) and as eco-friendly (Mabuwaya Foundation).

Let us focus first on the essential idea of the indigenous Agta as eco-friendly. First, the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) Act, aims to preserve biodiversity through protected areas, allowing indigenous peoples to continue living and exploiting resources within park borders, and to participate in park management, including the responsibility of protecting the land (LawPhil 2018). Second, the Indigenous Peoples' IPRA law allows indigenous peoples to hold collective legal title to their territories that they should *preserve, restore, and maintain* (Candelaria 2002: 258-259). Following the IPRA the NIPAS, I see similarities with Li (2000: 149) when she argues that the government essentialise indigenous groups, in this case the Agta, as the tribal slot, which implies that Agta members are innate protectors of the environment. Similarly, the Mabuwaya Foundation will fund and support an ethnobiological survey to assist the Agta members on getting the CADT. Thus, conservation programs like the Mabuwaya Foundation strengthen their collaboration with IPs, to advocate conservation plans for the "global" future more successfully (Hall *et al.* 2011: 225). To achieve this, Mabuwaya members provided Agta members with trainings about law enforcement or alternative livelihoods.

Coming back to the discourse on the Agta as indigenous and therefore as traditional, the Sisters influence this vision and discourse. Currently the Franciscan Order acts as the gate keeper of the Agta members and have developed a strong relationship with them. To learn more about the Franciscan Order and the Agta community, I spent most weekends with the two Sisters. The Sisters live in a house that is also a coordination centre. This coordination centre has two main buildings, a vegetable garden and a common space with a long table and chairs. On one of the walls, there is an organizational chart and the written mission over a wooden surface. This organization chart of the Pastoral Organization Centre includes all members working with the Sisters. The chart includes the PAGASACA School coordinators, who are also the teachers of the PAGASACA school. There are three main objectives that are important to understanding the Sisters' values. The first two values focus on creating a network between the Franciscan Apostolic Sisters and between "government agencies, non-government and religious organizations towards a unified and coordinated response and empowering relationships with the poor and indigenous people in Sta. Ana, Cagayan and neighbour towns". The third value establishes: "Organize advocacies, skills training and capacity building that will serve as a venue towards exchange of culture, skills, capacities that will promote human dignity, mutual respect and sensitivity towards indigenous culture, knowledge, systems and practices between and among those who participate in its programs and activities".

I believe that this value plays a key role among the Agta's members. First, the Sisters provide free education and health care to the Agta members. Second, to promote human dignity, the Agta leaders explained me how the Sisters gave them information on their rights as IP resulting from the IPRA law.

Moreover, the Franciscan Order has cooperated with the Agta community to create their organisation. In this association, the Sisters have a key role in organizing meetings in which three core values are encouraged: community, culture-traditions, and the act of sharing. The Sisters promote to return the Agta to an ideal of how they were in the past: a unified community, wearing traditional clothes, with traditional dance, love for nature and a strong culture of sharing within the community. The Sisters encourage the role of the elders as representatives of the Agta culture and community, as established in the IPRA law.

Because my role assigned by the Sisters was to record Agta traditions, the members advised me to first interview the elders as they probably have a lot to tell and still remember the Dupaningan Agta language. This also happened in a community interview at which only the Agta elders and leaders appeared, and recounted stories of the past. Therefore, this example corroborates that the value of the elders is important to understand the meta-narrative that the Sisters promote. The Sisters encourage the Agta to follow both Catholic teachings (including being baptised or getting married) and indigenous knowledge.



*Figure 7 Franciscan Brothers' representation of the Agta communities: Eco-friendly, protected by the Catholic Church and facing the changes of the development plans.*

In other words, the increased self-identification of the Agta as indigenous results in increased valuation of the “local” traditions, language, and culture. Therefore, this reaffirmation as Agta as indigenous requires to be understood as a mechanism in land conflicts and self-determination. It is based on exclusive governmentality like the IPRA law or the CADT that the Agta community use as a tool for affirmation in the highly politicised context of the Island. This discourse is constructed in dialogue with groups (other indigenous groups, religious groups, or NGO’s) that are in the same fight or that share the principles of their claims. These, and the anticipation of increased tourism have potentially resulted in the reinforcement of Agta culture through the materialisation of the school, the museum, and the Agta day. This way, Agta culture becomes a valued commodity, and Agta culture is essentialised as the native people from Palaui Island and becomes a part of the tourism product that Palaui Island offers. Moreover, Agta’s relationships with other actors and common claims reflect their active

position discussing the development of their territory and reflect that the Agta actively engage with the changes for decades. In the following chapter, I discuss how Agta members narrate the meaning of being Agta as a group and individually, beyond the political idea of being indigenous Agta.

## 8. The concept “Agta” through the Agta’s voices.

Most of my Agta informants argue that Agta, tribu (tribe), IP (indigenous people) or *katutubu* (indigenous in Tagalog) mean the same and they used it indistinctively during interviews. Nevertheless, in this chapter I consider it important differentiate between the concepts Agta and indigenous, in order to understand the Agta’s collective identity construction.

At the collective level, being indigenous Agta is more than a political category. Being Agta refers to the collective feeling of belonging to a group. Since the first day I arrived at Palaui Island, most of my Agta informants, described how ever since the Japanese invasion until the present day, their ancestors and themselves have been marginalised. To put an example, the last day of my fieldwork I met Rachel, a young Agta who works outside Palaui Island. When visiting her parents on Palaui Island for the weekend, I asked her if she could tell me about challenges that Agta members face on Palaui Island. Then Rachel said, “they (Ilocano) consider us as a low profile. We are considered as lazy and nothing more. There is no good for them”.

Rachel’s comments reflect how non-Agta treat Agta and how Agta feel. Minter (2017 in Hagen and Minter 2019: 12) suggests that government institutions promote indigenous communities as childish or dependent or as Taylor, (1997: 25) argues, as second-class citizens. Instead, they encourage “Christiano” life that involves a sedentary way of living. Sedentarism is associated with a modernised, and therefore better, form of living. On Palaui Island, Barangay employees described how Agta members are in the process of becoming civilized. This way, employees argue that “investing more time learning from the tourists and attending formal education will be helpful for them”.

I argue that the internalization of this repetitive discourse produces a big inferiority complex in the Agta members. As my Agta informants commonly argue, they often feel bullied. This question of identity brings us to discussions on the politics of recognition, and the need of individuals for the feeling of belonging to an “accepted community”. As Taylor (1997: 33) argues the recognition of an identity is part of an internal dialogue between an individual and others who we see as capable of giving us recognition. In the context of Palaui, I observed Agta members consider Ilocanos as capable of giving them recognition. For example, Diana a young Agta proudly told me in an interview how Ilocano women want that their children follow PAGASACA school as the teachers and education are better. Diana’s comment reflects how she, like most Agta members, gives importance to what Ilocano neighbours think.

By following my Agta informants on their daily activities, I did not encounter conversations about the meaning of “being Agta”. However, I encountered conversations in which my informants talked about some non-Agta calling them *pugut* or *kulot*<sup>27</sup>. In an interview with Kelvin, a young Agta male who is the teacher in PAGASACA and from whom I will tell more about in the next chapters, considers the physical appearance as one of the main features on the Agta identity: “the physical appearance is the first thing that someone sees. In our case, even if you see me for far away, you can know I am Agta”. When I ask Agta members about their identity, they all answer that the main characteristics are that they are black and have curly hair.

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<sup>27</sup> *Pugut* means ‘headless, head-hunter, black person’, and *Kulot* means ‘curly hair’ but in a pejoratively manner.



My informants described me how their looks limit the jobs available to them (See chapter 13 for more details). In this sense, in younger generations I observed a desire to change their appearance by whiten their skin or straightening their hair. Even elders like Margarita compares with the Agta ancestors and commonly argue: “in the past, we were dirty; we did not comb our hair, we were almost naked. Now we changed”. So, elders displace the idea of looking uncivilised (that non-Agta use when referring to Agta) on their ancestors. Thus, bringing back Bulloch’s (2017: 20) ideas, people may be able to locally reinvent development discourses to improve their social status, but they may be doing so within the limitations of the larger context that nevertheless oppresses them and that they are maintaining.

So, due to discrimination, the question of identity plays a key role in the Agta’s life. The question of discrimination among my Agta informants influences how members see themselves engaging with the future developments of the Master Plan. The reader could anticipate that the adult women who worked in Manila, could feel more qualified to work on potential future jobs the Master Plan may bring. On the contrary, these women focus on fishing, do not take part in the tourist activities, and continuously repeat “we are not ready for these new jobs. We are not skilled enough. They (CEZA) will bring people with those qualifications”. I argue the lack of education (chapter 11) and the physical appearance impact on how my informants position themselves towards the concept of development (chapter 9) and towards the large-scale tourism project (chapter 13).

To fight that discrimination, the Sisters have focused on giving to the Agta the tools to increase their own self-esteem, which as Taylor (1997: 25-26) argues is crucial for ensuring individuals’ wellbeing. To this end, the Sisters together with other external actors (NCIP, NGOs, etc), have focused on explaining to the Agta the tools they have as indigenous, and their right to own a communal land through the CADT recognition. My point here is that through the acknowledgement of this political tool, I observed that most of my informants feel proud of being Agta. My first day in the field I asked Marine, a young Agta, if she felt Agta. Marine told me, “*sempre mam*”. (‘of course, ma’am’!). In Facebook Marine posted, “I am proud of being an Agta”. My Agta informants commonly described me how they are the original inhabitants of The Philippines, and how they possess a unique culture and language that they would like to preserve. Moreover, informants like Kelvin, a young-adult Agta told me: “now tourist look at Agta dancing, and they will say, or that is their dance, that are their clothes”. Thus, as I will further explain in chapter 12, Agta members commonly believe that tourism will help them to spread the Agta culture and traditions.

Besides the need of recognition (Taylor 1997: 25-27) for building a solid self-identity, Bullock (2017: 113) describes how individuals construct their identity in comparison with others and this othering takes many shapes. Among these otherings inside the Agta community, looking at the young-elderly distinction will offer more perspective into the question of identity. Below, I will examine Margarita’s and Marine’s testimony. With these examples I seek to describe the daily life on Palaui Island, the aspirations and fears, and different ways to engage with development and modernity from the perspective of an elder, and a young woman.

**Margarita (Elder)**

During my first day on Palau Island I met Margarita. Margarita lives in a cement house on the area of the Orphanage. Since the first day I met Margarita at her house, her vitality and sense of humour caught my attention. Margarita belongs to the elder group-although her age is not precise, the census says Margarita is 65.

Margarita told me about her life “I came to Palau Island when I was 12 years old because I got married with an Agta man. At that time, marrying an Agta was difficult, as you needed to prove your parents in law that you were worth it (...) For example, you needed to show that you were fast gathering wood”. This comment is important to understanding the shift in marriage practices. Currently, Agta women and men are mostly marrying Ilocano and the practices that Margarita described are left aside.

Margarita continued with her story: “I lost my three children and my husband. And I married again. But my second husband also died. So that is when I decided to learn about herbal medicines”. In the Agta community, Margarita is the only member that knows about these herbal medicines, but she argues she will be the last one knowing that cultural practice as her descendants did not learn from her. Because of her knowledge of herbal medicine, she assisted to a National meeting with other indigenous peoples from the Philippines. The fact that Margarita joined that meeting materialises the Agta’s ascription to the Indigenous National movement.

Currently, she has two daughters and a son, and 6 grandsons and granddaughters and is married to a non-Agta man called Tom. They have two houses, one in Orphanage, and a second one on the other side of the Island in the area called Siwangag where Margarita owned a rice field. Margarita is the only woman that walks alone in the forest. Nowadays, as I explain in chapter 10, only men that go gathering honey know their way in the forest. Also, women that work as a tour guides, usually go to the deepest parts of the forest but following the tourist path.

Since the first day we met until the last one, Margarita always talked about the deceased Anti Letis. On the day of her death, Margarita and Anti Letis were together alone in Siwangag. Anti Letis, who was Margarita’s companion catching octopus, decided to go to the sea on her own and never returned. I could feel the sadness on Margarita’s voice. And even, guilt. Margarita said “I found Anti Letis lying next to her boat... But it was too late”. Margarita argued that the rest of the members blamed her from her death. But I never noticed any blame or negative feelings from other members. Instead, I see similarities with Minter’s research (2017) on the Agta from SNMP. Minter argues that when someone from the Agta groups of the SNMP dies, the Agta members commonly feel guilty as they perceive it as a personal failure for not keeping the person alive (Headland 1987; Garvan 1963; Schebesta 1957 in Minter 2017: 131). Additionally, female adult Agta often describe among each other how they felt the spirit of Anti Letis when they are going near where she lived or during dreams. While I heard these statements from the elders and adults, I did not hear such statements from the youth, like Marine.

**Marine (Young adult)**

I met Marine, during my first day of fieldwork. She is 28 years old. She started high school, but she did not continue. Her father was Agta and her mother non-Agta. She has three sisters and a brother who live like her, in the area of the Orphanage. When she got married to a non-Agta man, Marine spent some months on the mainland. But as Marine describes “I returned to Palau Island because at least here you have something to fish every day”. Her husband goes fishing with his neighbours. Marine practices two main livelihoods. During low season of tourism, she goes fishing, gathers sea urchins and she is learning how to catch octopus from her aunt.

Because Marine and her family spoke English and were very welcoming every time I went to see them, I joined Marine multiples times when she went to the sea during low tide. While talking about her Agta ancestors, Marine argued that her ancestors and the elders believe in spirits and do *moma*. “But I do not do that”. This sentence is not unique to Marine as other young people say similar sentences. For example, Jaqueline is 25 years old, her father is Agta and her mother is non-Agta. She lives outside Palau Island. I asked her if she thinks there are cultural differences between her father and her mother. And Jaqueline answered: “Yes, because my father does traditions when he goes to the mountains. He says something like *gamo, gamo*, and my mother puts this face (gesticulates)”.

I observe that most of the younger Agta distance themselves from what they consider traditional. For instance, while Mervin, a young male Agta, argued: “It is not bad to follow the belief of elders. But that is not our doings. We are not like that. If you look at the future or the next generations, they should not focus on old people like Agta”. I argue, like Bullock (2017: 194), that when a younger Agta asserts that an elder still practices *moma* or believes in spirits and distances themselves from these practises, this younger member may be seeking to elevate their status within a national development hierarchy by displacing backwardness on others, in this case the elders. This division between older and younger generations presents friction on the narrative. At the meta narrative, the elders represent what the Agta culture means but at the individual level, the elders are characterised as traditional, and become the “other” to whom one can compare favourably.

To sum up, I argue that the Agta identity is more than Agta reinforcing being indigenous as a political tool. Instead, it is a feeling of belonging to a community and a territory. Following the Agta’s narratives will allow the reader to see a community with heterogeneous histories, lives, and aspirations but at the same time with a strong desire at the collective level for preserving their culture and remaining where they belong. The collective and individual levels are connected, but I have analysed them separately to get more nuance. If we look at the narratives at the collective and individual levels, they may seem to contradict each other. For example, at the collective level, the Agta might strive to preserve their cultural traditions. Instead, at the individual level my informants’ distance themselves from their ancestors for being traditional. Those frictions are not only important to understanding how tradition and modernity are reinvented. These descriptions about the concept of being Agta impact on how Agta individuals position themselves towards the future development of the Master Plan. For instance, younger generations see the elders as less communicative with tourists or with less capacity to learn

new skills. For these reasons, younger members argue that the elders will not be ready to work in the new development projects. In the following chapters, I want to reflect on how Agta members construct their identity and position themselves towards development. Likewise, these discussions will help to analyse the Agta's aspirations and fears for Palau Islands and their individual and collective future.

## 9. Agta's narratives of development

This chapter offers insights about how Agta individuals define and engage with the concept of development. This chapter is the bridge that connects two of my main research questions. *How do indigenous Agta members construct their identity both individually and collectively, to negotiate their position in society? And How do Agta members from Palau Island anticipate the development plans?*

Agta and non-Agta inhabitants did not use the word development during my three months of fieldwork. Only when I asked about “what do you think about the future development of the project?” Agta informants used this word. For instance, young informants like Marine, Kelvin, Bryan, or Diana, refer to development in terms of having Palau Island cleaner. To describe how Agta members engagement with development is ambiguous, I analyse Kelvin's testimony, a young-adult Agta.

### **Kelvin (young adult Agta)**

Kelvin is one of the teachers of PAGASACA. He lives in the area of the Orphanage. He is married to Anna, who is not Agta and they have one son. Kelvin's father and mother are Agta, so the Agta community often refers to Kelvin as one of the last pure-blooded Agta. He is one of the only ones who has finished College. Because graduating on Palau Island is a signal of prestige, their co-Agta refer to him as Sir Kelvin.

Kelvin keeps a good relationship with the Franciscan Sisters and occupies a key role in the Agta community. Kelvin is the spokesperson of meetings with external actors (like with members of the PAMB) and responsible for transferring the message to the rest of the Agta members. Most members of the community admire him, listen to his words carefully and some of the answers about the Master Plan seem to replicate Kelvin's statements.

A normal day for Kelvin is picking up the children from the Orphanage area and taking them (by boat or, if the weather is bad, walking) to PAGASACA school. Since the place where I lived was near the school, we often had small chats in English, but I had not conducted a more formal interview. So, at the end of February, Regimar and I went to see Kelvin at the school. Kelvin gave the children a play break. We talked for about two hours; from the aspects he likes of the Agta school to what he thinks about the CEZA's Master Plan. In relation to the Master Plan, Kelvin said: *“you need to go with the flow, if you don't, you will be left out for the future...”* In Kelvin's words, *going with the flow* means to be flexible so you can be part of this modern world. I see this sentence closely connected to what Tsing argues about the idea of globalisation, in which in this imagery (that globalization provokes), the planet overwhelms us in its rush toward the future; we must either sit on top of it or be swamped (Tsing 2000: 331). Similarly, one of the leaders of the Agta group argued in one interview “Elders told us (Agta members) that Palau must remain peaceful. But when time goes by, the modern world is entering (referring to plans like the Master Plan). So, it is not like we have enough courage to make them stop (referring to CEZA)”. I interpret this sentence as a feeling by most of the Agta of lack of control towards development plans and uncertainty towards what these plans will

bring. Connecting the leader's statement with Kelvin's one, Agta members feel that they need to catch up with "this modern world" by doing what others do, as Kelvin explained during the interview. In the following section, I continue with Kelvin's testimony to illuminate the Agta's main influences in the construction of the concept of development.

### **The influence of the USA and Ilocano on Agta's concept of development**

Kelvin argues that going with the flow implies abandoning indigenous knowledge and adopting Ilocano knowledge. For instance, Kelvin told me that before his Agta ancestors used to fish with a spear. With the spear, Kelvin's ancestors only caught what they needed for the day and therefore they had plenty of fish for the future. Kelvin's comment is based on his value of knowledge now. For example, the concept of having enough fishes for the future is a modern way of thinking. Kelvin argues "we (Agta) follow the Ilocano way (of fishing) and instead we use the net. With the net, we have plenty of fish, and we can earn an income by selling them. But in the future, there will not be enough fish".

Two main ideas emerge from Kelvin's statement. The first one refers to the concept of sustainability, although my Agta informants never mention the word directly. Agta members are concerned with finding a livelihood that allows them to have enough for the future. Adult Agta with children often suggests that "because of the arrival of immigrants there is more competition on fishing. Therefore, in the future, fishing will be difficult". This way, fishing will not be sustainable. Worrying about the future, members commonly wish "to have a peaceful life and to make sure that our children follow education and find a job". Which I interpret as members feeling the difficulty of fishing and anticipating that in the future fishing will be harder, they wish for their children to finish formal education. Notice here, how the future plays a key role in understanding Agta members' decisions.

The second idea that emerges from Kelvin's arguments, and as Bullock (2017: 17, 77) describes, is that concepts of development are often implicated with assumptions that some people have more of a "correct" kind of knowledge than others. In Kelvin's arguments, the "correct" knowledge is represented by the Ilocano and it should be acquired by imitation and through formal education. Like often found in discussions on development, I observe two main frictions:

First, the Agta want to preserve their language, culture, and traditions. Simultaneously, the same members argue that to catch up, they abandoned indigenous forms and substituted those with the Ilocano ways of doing. So, they embrace both traditional and modern forms of knowledge.

Second, the concept of Ilocano, for my Agta informants, represents the group that in the past (are still in the present) marginalised or took advantage of them. Simultaneously, Ilocano represents modernity and the role model to follow to be successful. These boundaries in daily activities are more dynamic. For instance, in the case of younger generations, Victor, the leader's son plays basketball with non-Agta, works in PASAMOBABA, and all his friends are non-Agta.

Parallel to the Ilocano role model, since the Americans came to the Philippines the American culture also influenced the way of eating and clothing. In the same conversation with Kelvin, the issue of discrimination came across and he said “if you finish education, those people who bullied you, they will stop (...) Look at Barack Obama! Barack Obama is an inspiration”. This means that North American characters become role models. American culture influences Agta women like Marine or Diana that use cream to whiten their skin. This influence is visible too when Agta children recreate beauty contests inspired by American beauty pageants. I argue that like Bullock’s (2017) research in Siquijor, the USA culture influence in Agta’s definition of modernity.

I consider it important to remark that those external influences have changed during time. Elders and male adults told me stories about when the Japanese army lived in Cape Engaño or how their ancestors knew how to speak Spanish. Moreover, elder, and adult names are inspired by a funny story related to how they were born or with a Spanish name (E.g. Rogelio, Eduardo, Rosita). Instead, younger generations whose parents are intermarried are named by American influence (E.g. Edward, Bernadeth, William). I observed this phenomenon also on the landmarks, while some coves or small Islands have names in Dupanigan, Spanish or Ilocano. Because of the Survivor reality show, some of the small Island are known by their English name. Besides the use of English names, in the next section I describe how there are other markers that the Agta members use to renegotiate their position in society.

### **Development markers**

Although I found many markers of development during my fieldwork (material and immaterial), in this section I focus on the markers related to capacity to communicate and food. During the other chapters I will also describe additional markers (such as education or landmarks or physical appearance).

#### *Communication*

Concerning the ability to communicate, Agta elders like Margarita, describe how “in the past, we (Agta ancestors) did not communicate with others and communicated among each other in Dupanigan. Before our ancestors were very shy, if there were people near, they preferred to take a longer path than to face them. Unlike now, we know how to speak Ilocano and we know how to communicate with tourists”. Agta elders and younger members argue that, in comparison with their ancestors, they are less shy and more communicative. They attribute this opening up to the influence of intermarriage, or I believe in cases like my female adult informants to the time spent in Manila. Thus, I agree with Bullock (2017: 77) that communication is a marker of development that let people to connect with outsiders expanding connections and opportunities in life.

#### *The role of food*

My non-Agta informants often asked me what I was eating with the Agta community, explaining that the Agta do not know how to use spices. I argue that people use food as a marker of modernity and the use of the spice relates to being modern. Therefore, these non-Agta informants demarcate themselves from the Agta through food.

I also observed how elders position themselves as part of modernity, as Margarita described: “Our ancestors did not use spices. They cooked simple foods, and they used their hands to eat it. Now we are civilised, we use fork and knife and we use spices”. Thus, elder members use food or appearance to place the backwardness on their ancestors, while positioning themselves as “traditional” through the marker of communication.

Therefore, I agree with Bullock (2017) that food is an identity marker and with Aguilar (2005: 1, 26-32) that rice is a commodity inside the Philippines. Agta elders like Florinda told me “when I was younger, we only ate batata because rice was expensive and difficult to get.”. Instead, in the present Agta elders are happy because the money they earn with fishing is higher. Bullock (2017) goes further and suggests that in comparison the imported (especially American) foods are often seen as better than local foods, which are mocked as “the food of the poor”. For instance, most of my informants, specially the youth and the women who worked in Manila, were surprised that I ate rice. When I asked why, the reason was “because we saw tourists and they did not eat rice”. Therefore, female adults and youth, use rice as a differentiating marker with me “the Americana”, as it seems less prestigious compared to American food.

In conclusion, besides the biggest differences between older and younger generations, I found it difficult to establish clear patterns of how the Agta engage with modernity and tradition and therefore with development. In this dichotomy, two types of knowledge are attributed to these forms. Commonly modern implies proper knowledge, while traditional implies backward knowledge. However, among the Agta this dichotomy is not represented clearly. While in certain contexts Agta members reject the traditional knowledge, in others they embrace it. What Agta consider modern or traditional depends on external influences. The external influences differ depending on where the individual lives on Palau Island, family connections, life stories which includes the possibility of having worked in Manila, and more importantly the age. Apart from the role of the Sisters, similarly to Siquijodnon (Bullock 2019: 188) the American culture influenced the Agta way of thinking. Like Hagen et al (2016: 389) describe about the Agta in San Mariano, social change (especially intermarriage, working on the mainland, tourism, and formal education) on Palau Island impact the Agta’s identity construction and in the reinvention of modernity and tradition. In the following section I will pay a closer look to the concept and role of land in non-Agta and Agta’s individuals to further analyse how those social changes impact Agta individuals’ lives.



## 10. The role of land

In the theoretical framework I explained that when land becomes a commodity, powers of inclusion and exclusion take place (Hall *et al.* 2011: 4-7). On Palaui Island, these powers are translated into multiple actors that control the land and resources, and have legal mandates that impact how land should be used for the future: for tourism, for preservation, etc.

Because state actors (DENR, Navy, CEZA) and non-state actors (NGOs, investors, and inhabitants) are interested in the same lands, these multiple interests can create trouble between outsiders but also between inhabitants. The DENR mandate divided Palaui Island between an area that is multi use, and an area that is strictly protected. This means that it is forbidden to modify, to construct or exploit the resources in that area. The DENR promotes eco-tourism as a way of sustainably developing the Island. Sustainable in this case means that the inhabitants can earn an income while protecting the environment. Like DENR, CEZA also states their mandate is to sustainably develop Palaui Island. CEZA however looks to develop those lands that the DENR declared strictly protected by building a cable car (See chapter 14).

Theoretically, all state actors respect each other's mandates. But in practice, Agta informants like Margarita described situations in which these actors were not that respectful. For instance, when I joined Margarita to see her rice fields in Siwangag, she recounted how the Navy told her: "this land is ours, you can plant here, but this will be ours in case the land is distributed". I interpret this comment as the materialization of power relations in the Island and also I argue that this commodification of the land affects how the Agta see and interact with it. For instance, one day I was informally talking with Roberto, an elder of the community, about how Roberto's ancestors were. Roberto told me: "before, we were naïve! Teresa sold her land for a radio!". Roberto described how their ancestors were happy to have things the Ilocano had. So, a radio was a good exchange for a land. Roberto explained that in the past, the Agta did not appreciate the value of money. Rather, they valued having enough food for the day. I consider that as part of the development plans for the Island in which Agta members have been involved, they now consider land as a commodity. But as I will describe in the following section, unlike the non-inhabitant actors, the Agta's relationship with the land goes beyond mere economic value.

### Land beyond the economic value

One day Martin and Patrick, both adult Agta, as well as Regimar and I were walking in the forest following the course of the river. On the area where the water ran slower, Regimar saw dead shrimps. When Martin and Patrick saw the shrimps, they became worried and we returned to Punta Verde. As some members explained to me, those dead shrimp could imply two dangers: illegal logging, or a threat from the Ilocano. Martin and Patrick explained me that the water from that river conducts to the water pipe that only Agta member use. The presence of the dead shrimp could mean the water was poisonous.

Martin exclaimed "this is a threat from Ilocanos! It is not the first time they do it". Martin and other members told me that on other occasions, Ilocanos were jealous of the Agta: "the Agta before did not care about owning the land. But now that we know the value, this creates some troubles". For example, Martin told me about the time that the Agta (with the Sisters' support)

wanted to build the PAGASACA school. But one of the Ilocanos, Berlinda, whose family lived on Palaui Island since decades and own a big portion of Palaui Island, argued that Agta could not build on those land because she owned it. Martin did not really explain how the problem was solved, but in the end the Agta built the school there.



*Figure 8. Martin guiding us inside the forest.*

This story also shows how land for Agta members connects with the feelings of security and insecurity. Elders commonly argue that in the past, when the community was smaller and there was plenty of food Palaui Island was safe, and people respected each other and their lands. For example, Agta members maintained their ancestors' knowledge of collecting honey from March to June. When I joined Guillermo and his brother (adult fishermen) in finding the trees with hives, they marked the surroundings of those trees by putting leaves on the ground. As these informants told me, everybody would respect this signal in the past. But in the present, people including other Agta members or Ilocano, as Guillermo told me: "do not respect those signals and take what is not theirs". Apart from these disrespectful actions, the adult and elder informants argue that Palaui Island is not safe anymore. Martin described how "in the past, you could sleep on the seashore peacefully. Nowadays, that is unthinkable. If someone gets drunk, he will kill you". Martin explained me that some years ago, a person was sleeping on the shore and another person stabbed him. When I asked other informants about that incident, Stephany

an elder, argued that there was no reason for the murder, except that the murderer was drunk. Other informants like Kelvin, attributed the murder to land struggles.

Instead, younger generations like Angelica believe that “if the Master Plan is happening, Palaui will not be a safe place (...) If they build that bridge, everybody could come including bad people”. Nowadays, PEPA controls tourists coming to the Island. But with the possibility of building a bridge or cable car, and two luxurious docks, most of the Agta feel that they will not control who enters and therefore, bad people will enter. When I ask Angelica the meaning of bad people, she describes people bringing gambling or drugs. Angelica, who follows the high school on the mainland told me that she learnt about the possibility of those bad people from her two friends, who are non-Agta. This information is relevant to show a shared feeling of uncertainty among the Agta but also non-Agta members (as I will explain in chapter 14).

Like the concept of security, Margarita or Roberto’s narratives about land strongly connect to the concept of freedom. As these elder members told me, “the past was better than the present because we could move freely. In the past, there was plenty of space to move around: we had the freedom of going anywhere, to hunt, to fish or to gather other resources from the forest without restrictions (...)”. With restrictions, they referred to the legal restrictions by the Navy or the DENR, on constructing houses, fishing in front of Punta Verde, or gathering rattan from the forest. Younger generations also relate freedom to land. Members like Diana told me in an interview at her home that “in the future, if the project is coming, we are afraid of losing our freedom”. Therefore, while elder members complain about the present lack of freedom, younger generations express the fear of losing their freedom in the future. The difference in the framing of the definition of freedom depends on the life history of the individual. Elders experienced the change from collecting resources as they wished, to a restriction on freedom of movement and gathering resources. Younger generations, that grew up with these limitations, focus on the restrictions the Master Plan may bring. For instance, in a conversation with Patrice, a female adult woman, who has spent 10 years in Manila told me she worries about the project. “there are hearsays that soon we will not be able to fish in *Sibato Island*”. Most of the Agta go to *Sibato* when it is low tide, because of the proximity to Palaui Island and the availability of fish.

Beside the feeling of security and freedom, I observed how the land for the Agta contains a symbolic power and a sense of place. Thus, the symbolic power of the land plays a key role in the daily interactions and strength of identity. Elders and two male adults described places they avoid going, as there are malignant spirits there. Similar to Hagen & Minter when working with the Dimasalansan Agta (2019), my informants helped me to record the name of some mountains, rivers and beaches that are still called by the Agta nomenclature (Figure 8) and some stories about those places.



gained more economic value, and they get more money for the fish, for the honey and the tours (in the case of the youth). This has been possible at the expense of increased outside interest in the island which raises legal restrictions, more competition for lands and resources, and the elders' feelings of insecurity. Finally, with the risk of displacement or the radical modification of the lands, these elements, especially the community anchor which is the basis for the construction of the Agta's identity at the collective and individual level are at risk.

## 11. The role of education

In this chapter, I present the Agta's ideas and expectations about following formal education. Older and younger generations agree that in the past, formal education was not valued. One day Lavinia, one of the Agta adults, told me that there are still elder members, like Margarita, who argues that knowing how to fish or gather honey is better than studying, because it provides a livelihood. Margarita was there and laughed when she heard that statement and confirmed it. Elders like Stephany did not allow her daughter Leticia, now an adult, to follow formal education. When asking Leticia about why she did not follow formal education, she explained that: "education for our ancestors was not important. That is why before I did not go to school. My mother allowed me to go, it was my grandmother that did not want me to". When hearing these statements, the reader might think elders do not want the younger generations to follow formal education. However, that is not the case, and again, new frictions arise: Margarita, who argues that non-formal education is important, also defends that "education is important for the future. I regret not having continued school! I would have liked to become a lawyer or a doctor." Similarly, Stephany wishes that their grandchildren finish education. As they lack the skill for fishing, the only way to survive is through finishing formal education. Nowadays, the Agta members believe that education is the path to follow to access a better life.

### Which education? Influence of PAGASACA

As stated in the theoretical framework, the Philippines government tried to integrate the indigenous communities by imposing national ideas on the need for development. The government imposes a national curriculum, excluding other ways of knowing such as indigenous knowledge. However, since 2015 the Department of Education promotes Indigenous People education (DepED 2015 in Hagen *et al.* 2016: 407-408). As these authors argue intercultural education programs can secure a better future for Agta children while maintaining their culture and identity in a quickly changing time.

On Palaui Island those ideas materialised on the Agta inhabitants that in the past were considered impolite or uncivilised, and in the internalization of these discourses on the Agta youth. All the informants who followed formal education argued that they were not clever enough to follow the classes. For instance, Teresa, one of the young Agta who has finished high school argued in an interview at her house: "before, when PAGASACA was not built, we went to the public school, but I was not good enough, I was stupid". Teresa's comment, which I commonly heard from young Agta informants who followed mainstream school, reveals an internalisation of inferiority.

To alleviate this, the Sisters created the PAGASACA school. This school is a private entity in which the teachers, Agta and non-Agta, are working together with the Sisters to get the official recognition and subsidy by the government. The importance of the PAGASACA school and the teaching of indigenous knowledge and history it provides to the Agta community are clear from Teresa's and others' statements. For example, one of the leaders and his wife proudly told me "It is thanks to PAGASACA we are following formal education. Because it is the school



for the Agta”. This means that indigenous knowledge, which was a rejected for being a backward knowledge, is now becoming a source of pride and a tool for connecting the community. Before continuing to how education influences the Agta values, I should clarify that that when my Agta informants refer to education, they commonly remark the importance of learning how to read and write and finishing high school.

### **Education changing Agta values**

Since the construction of PAGASACA, most children regularly attend to school. Following education results that children do not know how to fish or gather honey, and thus distance themselves from nature. Moreover, because children are following education, they postpone marriage and the generation lengthens. This is in keeping with Naafs & Sketon (2018: 1-3) description of educations impacts on social dynamics. Education also changes the jobs that Agta consider decent. Decent jobs are like what Ferguson and Li (2018) argue, those jobs of a modern industrial society such as office jobs. Roberto (elder) states about those that “you do not depend on the weather”. This is consistent with what Naafs (2019) describes as education being the tool to escape from the current situation. This employment is believed to result in a stable livelihood, but also to be incorporated into the modern societal membership (ibid). Or as Marine says, “with education and with proper jobs we will be recognised in society”. I argue that Agta individuals believe that following formal education is the tool to being recognised as competent citizens. Therefore, here again, the reader will see how Agta refer (indirectly) about development as not only having certain jobs, but as Taylor (1997: 25) describes development is about finding recognition (as Agta group) in society. In the following paragraphs, I describe several assumptions that Agta individuals describe while talking about the benefits of following formal education.

First, most of the Agta members argued that education is characterised as a tool to stop discrimination. Parents maintain that if their children know how to read and write, they will sign documents related to Agta’s rights knowing what they are signing in the future. This way, people will not cheat them, and they will be respected.

Second, education is an instrument to not get lost. As Marine said “my father told me to study. He said that it is important for me to read and write. He told me: if you are in a big metropolis, you can read the signs”. This matches with Bullock’s ideas. Bullock describes for Siquijor (2019: 77) education offers people with a language with which they can navigate in the world beyond Siquijor. As Pigg (1996: 193) states education is a “lingua franca of modernity” that “allows one to move, to speak with more people, to establish far-reaching connections”. I see, following Pigg (ibid.) that Agta position themselves as part of the education and tourism plans, to show that one is a participant in a global project of modernity. Education, migration, appearance, and tourism are identified as a tool for transforming of the self.

Third, education in this context becomes a goal by itself: Claudia, an adult Agta told me “education is the only thing I can give to my children”. Claudia, as other Agta adults told me, that they do not have material possessions, but they can improve their children’s future success by schooling them. Simultaneously, like Bullock argues (2019), I observed that if a child follows formal education, this is perceived as personal and familiar improvement. I also found

knowing how to speak English repetitively as a marker of personal improvement. For example, Marisa described how she learnt English with a dictionary, and she wants to give one to her kids to learn. While asking why English was important, Marisa told me they use it to speak with tourists (although the majority are Filipino and Chinese) and in case her children go abroad. I interpret that Marisa's anticipation of the possible arrival of more international tourists provokes that she wants her children to be prepared for the future. Moreover, I see this comment in line with Bullock's (2019: 18), as she argues that the ability to speak English is a strategy to position as cosmopolitan.

### **Education for which future?**

Until this point I described how for most of my Agta informants the fact that their children are following formal education means improving their class and prestige. This however is not limited to their own children. When talking to Agta, some informants like Martin or Margarita told me about how Kelvin finished a College degree. I recognize that the fact Kelvin finished University is a source of pride for the rest of the community. It proves that Agta can also finish University. Likewise, the fact that my Agta informants have their own Agta school gives my informants tools for being proud of their Agta identity. In this construction of the PAGASACA, the Sisters play a key role as they are the foundations of the school and responsible for training the teachers in the Agta values.

My Agta informants repeatedly argue how grateful they are to the Sisters to put up a school for the Agta. Nevertheless, I noticed certain frictions between the Franciscan Order Sisters' and Agta members' plans for the future. The Franciscan Order argues that if a member finishes high school and college, that member should help their co-Agta by remaining on Palaui Island. As the Sisters argue, the PAGASACA students need a teacher from the community who understands Agta values. The Sisters question, that if the more skilled members leave the community to work on the mainland, who will be left?

On the other hand, two informants' narratives seem to differ from the Sister's plans. One informant, Claudia, who has finished a college Degree, maintains: "I also want my own future. And outside they pay more. People are judgmental, they criticize me because they think I have turned the back on them". Commonly, members of the Agta community establish that was selfish of her. "She should have helped us". When I asked how? Some people say: "by becoming a teacher, a lawyer, or by financial aid". Notice here that those members, mostly Ilocano women married to Agta men, criticize Claudia's decision to leave Palaui Island and simultaneously argue that their dream for their children is they find a good job even if that would be abroad. Moreover, these two female informants are planning to work in the Middle East as housekeepers to have an income for their families. Thus, there is a friction between the values promoted by the Sisters and what Bulloch (2017: 191) describes as neoliberal ideas, through which individuals have the right to earn for their individual purposes.

In conclusion, my Agta informants believe that education will help Agta children to navigate the future. My informants see education as a tool to communicate with others and to stop discrimination. Education in this sense becomes a goal in itself, as a tool for prestige not only for the child but also the family. At the communal level, the fact that some Agta members have



finished high school and College is a reason of collective pride. Specifically, following PAGASACA school represents those frictions that development brings. On one hand, that the Agta children follow an Agta education is a reason for pride among the community, as children will learn and preserve Agta traditions, language, and community values. Other reasons are that some tourists are already interested in Agta culture and Ilocano inhabitants want to join the PAGASACA school because the teachers seem to be more responsible than at the mainstream school. On the other hand, young and adult informants commonly argue that they stepped back from their ancestor knowledge (so from the knowledge there are proud to learn in PAGASACA school) and followed formal education because will allow them to become educated individuals and find decent jobs (or what Taylor (1997) Ferguson (1999) have described as “first class citizens”) and consequently to gain recognition in society. Finally, in the following chapter I discuss how I encountered similar expectations for the future through the involvement in tourism activities.

## 12. The role of tourism

In this chapter I explain how Agta members commonly believe that small scale ecotourism, similar to a formal education, can be useful for earning an income, to communicate with outsiders, and to share with them the Agta culture and values. Thus, Agta members believe that tourism can be useful for being recognised in society as the Agta community.

To explain this idea, I use the testimony of Roland. Roland is an adult Agta member married with an Ilocano woman. He is the only Agta who works as a security guard in the Barangay San Vicente. In an interview at his house, Roland describes: “before there were no tourists. Even when they came, and we guided them, we were not allowed to receive money, unless of course that they put it in your pocket. Everything changed with the Survivor” Roland recounted Palau Island only attracted people from the surroundings neighbourhoods. But since the recording of Survivor in 2013, tourist from other parts of the Philippines and China have started to come.

To know more about the Survivors filming, I asked Margarita about that. Margarita told me: “they (Survivor’s organisation and CEZA) did not tell us anything. One day I was going to fish in Siwangag and I found out I was not allowed to fish anymore. That is when everything started, and tourists came”. Like Margarita, most of the Agta members recounted how Survivor’s management decided with CEZA to record on the Island without asking the inhabitants’ permissions. Agta members described how thanks to the Sisters they were able to get some economic and material compensation (a boat and rice) from the reality show managers. Thus, while all Agta members refer negatively about the Survivor reality show (because it limited the access to Agta’s places of fishing as Survivors’ organisation used those places for filming), adult and younger adult also argue that thanks to Survivor, more tourists visit the Island.

Generally, Agta member describe how tourism gives them independence and empowerment through the creation of job opportunities and the possibility of economic growth. This is in line with Hinch and Butler’s ideas (1996: 4-6) about western-based economical ways of thinking, that promote the idea that indigenous people could benefit economically from tourism and solve their challenges.

Nevertheless, at the individual level, not everybody engages with tourism. As Ernesto, one of the leaders argues: “since the moment one project entered, that was the beginning of more plans coming”. Ernesto told me that while tourism brings job opportunities for the Agta community, he disagrees with those plans. He fears that plans like the Master Plan would take place, and that the Agta members will be displaced (See chapter 13 for more details). Also, I observed how old and adult members are largely uninvolved in tourism. I attribute this lack of engagement to their self-perception as unskilled for working in tourism. During the previous chapters (7-11) I described how elders are seen as traditional. I observed that some of elders attitudes are also applicable to male adults. Men mostly stayed on Palau Island or went to work in nearby towns and largely tend to believe in spirits and practise *alai*. Moreover, by the rest of the Agata members, they are considered shy and not talkative to outsiders. While conducting interviews with male Agta informants, most of them were very shy and on most occasions, their Ilocano wives answered in their name. Instead, adult women who have worked in Manila

as maids, are more talkative than the men. But I observed how being a maid is considered a profession for lower class people without formal studies. Jobs in tourism are deemed to require more communication skills than working as a maid. Therefore, neither elders nor adults feel qualified for the tourism jobs. Instead, the youth who started formal educations and have more interaction with outsiders through social media are seen by the community as more capable to work in the ecotourism project organised by PEPA.

### **The role of PEPA**

Some Agta members work for the PEPA. PEPA promotes eco-tourism activities to assist in the DENR's mandate to conserve and manage the island. This is in line with Hinch and Butler (1996: 6) who explain that eco-tourism projects seem to promote the belief that well managed ecotourism is a sustainable activity that respects the community's values. However, most of the Agta members (either male or female of all ages) claimed how PEPA's president does not treat them with respect. For example, as Rocio, an Agta adult woman (who is not working any more as tour guide) explained: "last year, a lot of tourists came to Palau Island because it was summer. We were ready for working and communicated our availability. But he (the President) instead of choosing us, he chose people from outside Palau Island that did not even have a training!". This example illustrates that most of the Agta members feel marginalised from this ecotourism projects, as they believe that PEPA's president favours non-Agta inhabitants. To get more context I asked non-Agta inhabitants about the role of Agta in tourism. For instance, Mikel, a young Ilocano responsible of organizing the tour guides, argued that some Agta members are still learning how to communicate with the tourists. So here again, the marker of communication plays a key role in positioning people as modern or backward citizen.

Because of this unequal treatment, the Agta argued that they wish they have their own tour guide organization to not depend on PEPA anymore. The Agta, supported by the Franciscan Order, are constructing a museum for the tourists. Agta members believe that with this museum outsiders will learn about the Agta culture. Similarly, Turner and Ash (1975 in *ibid.*) explain that there is a belief that increasing participation of indigenous people in tourism will help to spread and understand indigenous livelihood, and therefore in a more balanced relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

Overall, despite that not every Agta members engage in the tourism jobs, my informants believe that they can benefit for this economic activity. Like with every development project, tourism brought possibilities of economic growth but also the possibility of building the Master Plan. Like the PAGASACA school, Agta members believe that the museum, and therefore tourism will help them to be recognized in society as Agta. Focusing in this recognition new frictions appear: elders and even adults are considered not be prepared for the tourism jobs because they are "traditional". Simultaneously, this "traditional markers" become part of the idea that the Agta members are proud to show to outsiders. Furthermore, while Agta members described me during individual and collective interviews that they can engage with small ecotourism project, as I will explain in the following chapter, they feel overwhelmed by the possibility of the Master Plan taking place.

### 13. The Agta's anticipation of the future

This chapter aims to explain Agta's position towards the Master Plan, the Agta's fears and expectations for the future, as well as discussions about their dream for Palau Island and themselves. During the first interviews concerning potential benefits or risks of the Master Plan, I received these three answers "I do not know about it", "we do not know details about the plan and therefore do not know what to expect" and "the project could happen and could not happen". These answers were, at first, very confusing. The wrong assumption here was that I was expecting explicit statements like "we like, or we dislike the project". Soon, I realised that in understanding my informants' answers, I was including my own perspective of the plan.

I attributed Agta's feeling of uncertainty to the scarcity of clear information produced by a lack of communication among the members, innumerable hearsays, and contradictory possible consequences coming from multiple sources. In January for example, Kelvin, the Agta representative, attended an official meeting to get further information about the proposed Master Plan. After Kelvin's return, the community did not immediately meet to discuss Kelvin's information. Consequently, not all the members were on the same page about the proposed Master Plan. Moreover, I observed that agreeing on the date for a meeting was difficult. Therefore, not everybody attended the meetings and got the information. Additionally, hearsay was so abundant that for my informants and for myself, it was difficult to distinguish what came from a reliable source.

But also, as I will explain Agta members receive contradictory information coming from multiple actors. On one hand, these informants, and other members who listened to the leaders' information, described that CEZA promised to give economic benefits directly to the Agta association, without the need to deal with PEPA. On the other hand, most of my informants argue that during meetings with the Sisters and the Mabuwaya Foundation, they learnt the potential consequences such as contamination, risk of losing their jobs, or being displaced. Before, I described how the Sisters strongly influence in the Agta community's decisions, and the Sisters openly disagree with the Master Plan. Then why did Agta members accept the conditions about the Master Plan during a meeting to discuss the conditions?

I see this decision, that diverges from the Sisters' and the Mabuwaya foundations view, as a demonstration of the active engagement of the Agta members on influencing the future of Palau Island. I argue, based on observations and interviews, that there are three principal reasons for the Agta to vote yes to the Master Plan:

First, based on the leader's and elder's testimony about the discussion of the conditions, CEZA focused on the potential benefits like building a high school, healthcare or giving jobs. However, CEZA avoided explaining the potential risks of constructing those new infrastructures and bringing a bigger number of visitors. But this information, apart from being partial, was not accessible to all Agta. When Kelvin went to that meeting in January, he returned with a copy in English of the proposed Master Plan. Notice that the Master Plan given to the Agta members was written in English. Therefore, this document excludes most of the people who lack English knowledge or reading skills.

To put it in context with the theoretical framework, Hanger and Minter (2019: 12) illustrate a comparable case<sup>28</sup> with the development of the road in Agta's territories. Theoretically, Agta's representatives agreed with the plan. However, these authors examine two elements: the ability of those representatives to actually represent the community and the bias of the information (in the meeting, the external actors only explained the positive consequences of the road). This is in line with Cross (2015: 434) idea that outsiders use the local reproduction of being modern and part of the global world, to convincing the inhabitants of accepting their plans.

Second, as Kelvin told me "it is better not to say "no" completely because by agreeing with certain conditions we have more chances of getting what we want". Kelvin, like most of my informants, argues that when they discussed the plan with CEZA, they negotiated to conserve Siwangag. Siwangag cove is the sacral place for the Agta members, but CEZA plans to develop that cove as a water sports recreational centre.

Third, I argue that Agta members' fear to CEZA prevents the Agta members of speaking up on those meetings for negotiating the conditions. For example, returning to the meeting that Kelvin assisted in January. For that meeting, Agta members planned that three of the members will attend. However, on the day of the meeting, only Kelvin went. When I asked why the two other members were absent, Paulina, a female adult, replied "maybe the other two were afraid". Paulina's answer is connected to what Roberto, an elder Agta told me: "I am afraid we might be killed because of land issues. I do not know what will happen because of this battle. Specially nowadays there are many rumours that are doing inhumane activities, like if you go walking someone can stab you or kill you". Roberto's comments refer to the story told in chapter 10 about the murder on the beach. Roberto's statement also matches with the information provided by the youth about the fear most elders and some adults have for outsiders (including CEZA). Thus, it explains why some Agta members questioned the capability of elders, or even the leaders in representing the rest of the members in those meetings.

Besides these three ideas in relation to the Agta's ambiguous opinions about the plan, in the next section I describe how Agta members see themselves in relation to the Master Plan.

### **Are you skilled enough?**

As explained in the preceding chapter, while most of the Agta members welcome tourism only the youth (except for some adults and one elder) work in the small-scale tourism project. When asking my Agta informants if they are willing to work on the potential jobs that the Master Plan will bring, my informants like Lavinia, an adult, argue that only Marine and her sister could fit in those new jobs: "because they do not seem Agta. Their skin, hair, they are beautiful". Marine and Diana are half-half, they are taller than the female Agta adults, whiten their face, use make up and paint their nails. So here again, looking like an Agta seems to be very present in every

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<sup>28</sup> Hanger and Minter case is comparable in the way that their research focus on the Agta and the construction of a large infrastructure. There are however, difference in context: The Agta members from Palau are represented on the PAMB and are working to get the CADT. This legal situation give the Agta members from Palau Island a better position to negotiate the future development plans.

aspect of the Agta's lives as for example Lavinia describes, how it determines potential opportunities.

Furthermore, most of my informants argue that "we are not qualified for those new jobs". These informants argue that they will be happy to receive trainings for CEZA to apply to those new jobs. Therefore, Agta members feel qualified for the small-scale ecotourism project but not for the large-scale eco-tourism Park. My informants anticipate that CEZA will not choose them because of their looks and lack of skills. These anticipations connect with Li's (2000: 149, 151) and Tsing's (2007) explanations about the essential category of tribal slot which fixates those indigenous groups into ecotourism projects. Consequently, I interpret that the Agta members (experiencing unequal treatment from the PEPA because they are indigenous) anticipate that they will not be desired for jobs at CEZA's luxurious tourism project.

Moreover, as Rocio, an adult woman argues, "because we are not skilled, they will bring people from outside Palau Island". Looking at what Cross (2015:424-427) describes, inhabitants in the South of India that gave up their lands could not work in the new official jobs. In SEZs, employees are often brought from outside the local market to control them and to avoid future conflicts. Cross explains that reasons for not hiring the locals also relate to age or lack of skill. I find similarities in Palau Island, such as Kelvin who describes they have asked CEZA to receive training. Because as he says "at least, maybe the children (who now follow formal education) can be employed". But then, Kelvin states "we (the youth) can follow the training and we can be prepared for the jobs, we can become skilled, but what about the elders? They only know how to fish". Like what Cross (ibid.: 424) pointed out with the SEZ in India, Kelvin as the rest of the youth anticipate that the older generations will be excluded from these jobs for being too old and not skilled enough.

Moreover, next to the topic of the possibility of new jobs, young informants refer to the possibility of losing their current jobs. Elders, adult, and younger generations argued that they fear they will not be able to fish, as there will be many tourists, or the water will be polluted. Adult and young Agta women argue they fear if the cable car is built, they will lose their jobs as a tour guide as tourists would not need them. Also, because of the cable car the jobs in PASAMOBAs will be finished as tourists will not need a boat anymore. Besides the risk or opportunities related the jobs, how do Agta members anticipate the Master Plan? To describe the potential fears and hopes we will examine Gonzalo's testimony a young Agta male.

### **Gonzalo (young male)**

At lunch time (mid-day), Regimar and I were chatting with Marine, her sister Diana in the area of the Orphanage, when Gonzalo came just to say hello. He told us that he was waiting for the boat to the mainland, to play in the basketball finals. While he was waiting for the boat, we chatted about basketball and girls. I asked Gonzalo about the tourism on Palau Island. He argued that it is good. "Because some Agta are tour guides or work in PASAMOBAs like me and benefit economically from it". But he argued that "we (inhabitants) should fight for the Island. Because CEZA is getting the Island. CEZA has made a lot of modifications. Like rebuilding the lighthouse or the *kobo-kobo* (small wooden houses to sell souvenirs) ... And now the view from the lighthouse is not good. Before, the view was natural because there were

not those cottages” Then I asked if he would like more development of the Island. Gonzalo answered “Yes, Palaui Island is good for development, but not for big buildings... I would like that Palaui Island would look like it looked before (without the *kobo-kobo*) ... If they put up those big buildings, it will make Palaui Island ugly. The view will be destroyed”. While asking if Gonzalo thought that the project will bring new jobs and benefits. Gonzalo said: “Maybe is not good. Maybe we will be removed or prohibited to put a house (...) Some *barcadas* (friends) move to Centro (on the mainland) because they are afraid”.

Gonzalo’s answers represent, to a certain extent, most of my informants’ opinions about tourism and the potential risks and benefits that the Master Plan may entail. Gonzalo’s statements connect with the discussions on development and future discussed in the theoretical framework. With every opportunity for development new risks of exclusion also come along as Hall *et al.* (2011: 4) argue. Gonzalo likes the small-scale tourism as he can profit from the jobs it creates. However, he sees CEZA as a threat for his life on Palaui Islands and for the development of Palaui Island itself. Related to the potential exclusions, he fears not being allowed to build a house. Therefore, he fears that his freedom will get limited. The topics of freedom and security often appear during the interviews as some of the most important values that all the Agta members wish to preserve (see further discussions chapter 10) and fear to lose if the Master Plan takes place. Agta informants repeatedly argue that if this project is built, they will lose the capacity to control who enters Palaui Island and could result in the possibility of bad people arriving, who might bring gambling and drugs. Gonzalo describes the potential risks through which I divided this chapter: Aesthetics, displacement, loss of control, and environmental impact. Finally, I use Gonzalo’s statement to reflect upon Agta’s members hopes for the future.

### **Future displacement**

When talking about the potential consequences of the Master Plan, my informants fear being displaced from where they live. But if we take into consideration IPRA law and the recognition of the Agta members as being native to Palaui Island, they are one of the inhabitant groups with a legal right to remain on the island. Even so, the uncertainty of being displaced from their lands is present in the Agta’s testimonies. Displacement in this context refers not only to the possibility of being moved from their places of living, if not losing their autonomy of moving freely on the island and the sea. The most expected consequence of the Master Plan is pressure to resettle in Punta Verde. I noticed, based on commentaries from the group of Agta living on the East side of the Island and from the people living in Orphanage, that members do not seem happy at the prospect of living there together.

Bringing back the discussions on the future, Gonzalo’s friends have already moved to Centro (the mainland) anticipating potential risks that the Master Plan could bring. Thus, following Bryant and Knight’s (2019) discussions about orientation, helps the reader to understand how like Ferguson (1999) describes, the vision of an uncertain future brought by a potential development project impacts the inhabitant’s decisions.

Until this point I have described how Agta members anticipate the risks or fears for themselves. In the next section, I focus on the Agta’s narratives on the potential modifications by the Master

Plan to Palau Island.

### **Aesthetics and environmental impact**

Bringing back Gonzalo's interview, my interlocutor disagrees with the vision of constructing buildings for developing Palau. Instead, Gonzalo prefers to preserve the vegetation to keep its natural look. Gonzalo's statements connect with Larkin's (2013: 336) research. This author argues that individuals describe their feelings towards infrastructures with regards to its aesthetics. Adults and youth argue that they like Palau Island because of its vegetation and white sand beaches. In an interview, Maria, a young Agta describes: "we fear that the Island will look ugly. It may look nice for tourists, but not for us because it will not look green (...)". When Maria talked about the green, she pointed out to the forest and the rice fields. Maria lives in a cement house in the area of the Orphanage. Personally, it is one of my favourite spots. At Maria's house you are on the edge of the deep forest, next to a river with crystalline water, on its left are rice fields and if you look at the horizon, you can see the sea.

When informants like Maria describe the future look of Palau Island, they often talk about the risk of having rubbish or polluted water. As Belinda argues, "if more tourists are coming, where is the rubbish going? If they throw human waste, what will happen to the water where we fish? (...) Have you seen Boracay? I watched it on TV. Full of rubbish and tourists". Belinda is an adult woman who spent 7 years in Manila working as a maid. She told me that in the past she had a TV and watched the news. I noticed that the influence of the Sisters, DENR and Mabuwaya Foundation trainings, TV, and social Media results in the Agta members pointing out the possible environmental impact that the Master Plan could entail.

Together with the ideas of aesthetics and environmental impact, these conversations bring us again to the topic of sustainability. As argued in chapter 9, Kelvin, like commonly expressed by elders and adults, worries about future difficulties for fishermen to find marine resources. These informants also imply that Master Plan will not be sustainable, as it will destroy the vegetation and will produce garbage.

### **Open ended futures**

When talking about Agta members' future dreams and plans, Agta elder and adults focus all their dreams around their children and the new generations. Most of the Agta informants wish that their children finish formal education and find a proper job. As Roberto argued "an office job" from which you do not depend on the weather (See chapter 11 for more details). When Agta members refer to Palau Island, all generations say they want Palau Island to remain as it is. In an informal conversation with Marine about how she imagines an ideal future she told me: "my dream is Palau Island as green as it is, without rubbish, with me as a tour guide, with a hospital and a high school". So, development for Marine means health care, education, and small-scale tourism but she does not refer to new large-scale infrastructure. I see similarities with Bulloch's (2017) interpretation about the meaning of good life as synonymous to simple. The word simple kept coming up in my conversations about life on Palau Island. Agta elders argue that life was simpler in the past because they could move and hunt freely. Therefore, they wish to come back to an imagined ideal past, where had freedom and plenty of food.



The three Agta women informants who spent a long period in Manila working as maids as well as the youth, describe how life on Palaui is simple. As Violeta, an adult woman, told me: “life in Palaui is simple because it is more peaceful and easier than in Manila. Here you go outside, and you have a livelihood”. However, Violeta similarly to other female adults insists that life was simpler in the past, meaning fewer people and more security and freedom. In the same conversation, Violeta told me that if the Master Plan is built, the freedom and security will disappear. This way, putting my informant’s answers in relation with previous discussions on development, land, education, tourism, and Bulloch’s (20017: 194) ideas, simple life means access to health care and education, but it values caring about the family and a peaceful and austere life over the possibility of building large scale projects and all the potential benefits these might bring.

This ideas of anticipating the future connects with the discussions on the theoretical framework, namely that within a time-space my informants talk about multiple options and futures (Pels 2015:782; Bryant & Knight 2019: 3, 195-196). First, my informants believe the Master Plan may not happen. Second, they hope that the CADT will get approved as they believe they will have more control on their land and third, as Marine told be in an informal conversation, with this title they hope to be finally recognised in society.

To conclude, as I hope I have explained, to understand the complexity of the Agta member’s decisions about the Master Plan, we should understand how Agta members negotiate their socio-economic position in society, engage with development and anticipate it. Agta members believe that through education and tourism at a small scale, they will progress in society. Agta members commonly describe me how a large-scale tourism project will not fulfil their expectations as “it will make Palaui ugly, we will lose the power of controlling who enters and this way bad people will come”. Moreover, informants fear that CEZA will not follow what it promises. Namely, tourism will could destruct Agta’s sacral places, they will not benefit (economically) for the project and they will lose the jobs they are used to. As explained during these chapters, the common feeling of the Agta is uncertainty produced by the overlapping of different aspirations between the Agta and other actors’ mandates. Finally, in the next chapter, I explore how the Agta’s desired future both conflicts and overlaps with other actors’ mandates and aspirations.

## 14. Non-Agta perspectives on the future of Palau Island

In this chapter, I analyse the underlying logic of sustainable development portrayed by the DENR and CEZA. I also examine how the Master Plan is being negotiated between the inhabitants and non-inhabitant actors. I believe that understanding these answers will explain *how non-Agta actors anticipate the future development of Palau Island?*

Ecotourism is the common discourse presented in the state and non-state actors' mandates as a tool to achieving sustainable development on Palau Island. The DENR argues that the Protected Area [m]ust be consistent with the principles of biological diversity and sustainable development (...) The State shall ensure (...) the full scientific and technical support needed for the conservation of biodiversity and the integrity of the ecosystems, culture and indigenous practices," the expanded protected area law reads. (LawPhil 2018)

Notice that the DENR focuses on sustainable development through conservation. This way, the DENR has the mandate to develop the strictly protected areas to preserve the biodiversity, culture, and indigenous practices. Sustainability in this case consists of strict protection, local tourism, and preservation for the future.

During the first week of March, I took a tricycle to the CEZA offices in Santa Ana. I carried with me a letter in which I expressed my desire to arrange an appointment with the Officer in Charge of the Cagayan Offices. When I arrived, a friendly employee called Robert welcomed me. Robert explained to me that the Officer in Charge was in Manila and took my letter to hand it to him. I explained Robert that I was interested in the Master Plan and how CEZA was developing Santa Ana. Later, Robert looked at me and asked me: "Have you seen the CEZA video? You will like it!" He took a remote control and played the video (CEZA 2019).

During the video, CEZA depicted how the SEZ will look in the future. As already explained in chapter 2, their mandate is to attract investors and promote luxury tourism for promoting sustainable development. Paying attention to the underlying idea of the SEZ and of the Master Plan in particular, CEZA argues the Master Plan will bring fast economic benefit to the communities that live in these areas, improving their lives. I argue that CEZA presents this as evolutionary progress in which poor people living in isolated areas can improve their living conditions. However, CEZA gives no further details, like which community those facilities will serve, and how the plan will affect the relocation of inhabitants or will impact on the environment. For instance, notice that the area of Punta Verde which is the focus of the development plans is also where more than 700 people live. I compared the map provided by CEZA (Figure 9) with the coordinates and put those coordinates in Google Earth (18° 32', 10" N, 122° 08' 45" E).

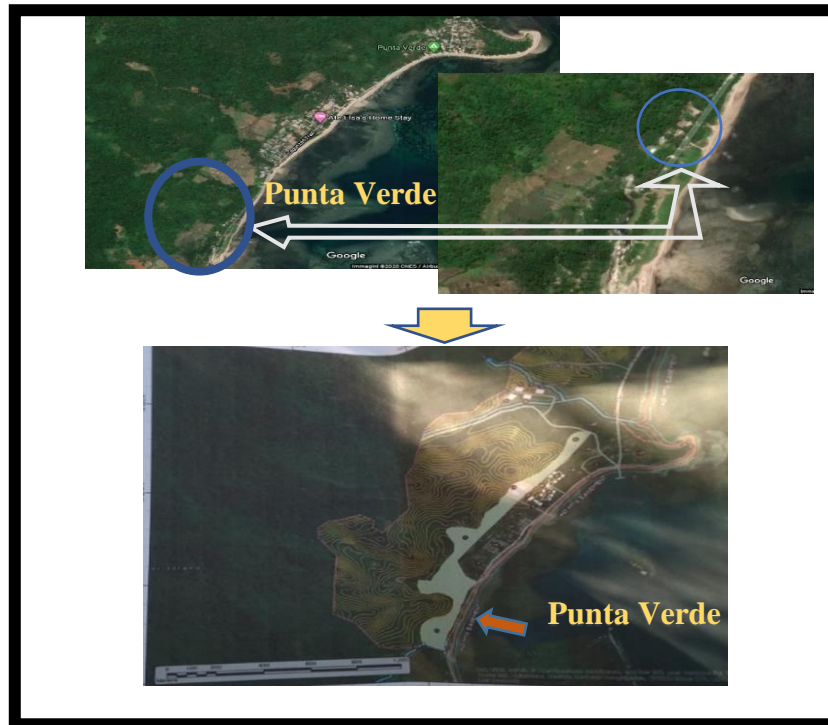


Figure 10. Comparison of the proposed Master Plan (picture at the bottom) and the current houses located in the area where CEZA wants to build a vegetable farm (orange arrow).

The future the vegetable farm (light greenish area with an orange arrow) overlaps with people's houses (blue circles). In this sense, while talking with non-Agta about the Plan, they commonly indicated the fear of being relocated. For example, Ronald, a young Ilocano told me, "my friend and I disagree with this plan, I like Palau Island as it is. We fear the risk of being displaced". On asking why they tough that, Roland and his friends described two primary reasons: firstly, the information shared in a community meeting, and secondly the example of a place on the mainland where people were removed from their lands. I include this example, to show that, although non-Agta are not part of my research, this feeling of uncertainty towards what the Master Plan could bring was shared among most of the inhabitants of Palau Island.

Moreover, I observed how despite the Master Plan not yet materialising, negotiations and different power dynamics are taking place. And this is where Mosse and Lewis (2006: 13) suggest the actual development takes place. For instance, halfway through my research I had an interview with the Barangay Captain and Barangay councillors. They asserted they disagree with the Master Plan. Not only for the environmental risks, but also on a personal level as they fear being transferred. As the Barangay employees argue "only businessmen will benefit". The employees explained me that this political unit does not have power to intervene in CEZA's decisions. So, this example evidences the different power relations that exist between stakeholders with influence over the future of the Island.

Moreover, the Sisters (as one stakeholder involved in the PAMB) told me that in a meeting about the CADT survey, the CEZA anticipated that the Agta getting the CADT approval would be an impediment to developing their mandate. In this sense, I agree with Cross (2015: 424-

426) that the clash of different aspiration for the future produce conflicts rather than bringing all futures into the same line of prosperity (as promoted by the advocates for the SEZ). Moreover, as Hall *et al.* (2011: 12) describe, these overlapping of mandates and power-relations enable stakeholders at various levels to execute their powers and exclude less powerful groups (indigenous groups) from decisions about development planning. For example, as a result of the unequal power between the actors, the Agta members who have a weaker legal power position, have been waiting for the approval of the CADT for 10 years. For reasons like this one, Agta members' and the Sisters' testimonies show they fear that exclusion from the decisions about their future will happen.

In conclusion, I agree with Davidov (2013: 205) conclusions on ecotourism in Ecuador, that ecotourism has become an activity through which culture, politics, indigeneity, natural resources, and sustainable development are harmonised in the Philippines. The Philippine government argues that these development projects will bring material prosperity through economic expansion. In this context, I agree with Cross (2015: 4) that development, negotiated through land acquisition, displacement and resettlement are modelled by the speculative investments, and the dreams and hopes of the inhabitants. In this sense, by paying attention to the personal experiences and narratives of anticipation the inhabitants hold towards the Master Plan, the Agtas' claims and desires express a unique way of thinking about modernity and development, that does not include the large-scale reconstruction of their territory for tourism. Moreover, through the analysis of non-inhabitant actors', non-Agta inhabitants' and Agta inhabitants' testimonies, I describe that there is not one development, and hence not a single teleology. The question here is, as Climaco Tambden (2016: 6) proposes for an inclusive and sustainable SEZ, if the CEZA and the other actors involved in decision making will respect the inhabitants and find a common path for thinking about development.

## 15. Conclusion

This thesis has focused on the voices of Agta community individuals from Palaui Island. Furthermore, I have also aimed to understand the Agta's claims in the context of the policies and overlapping mandates. To understand what the Agta's aspirations are for a project yet to come, I explored in depth about how Agta engage with development and position themselves in society. Within these narratives, I describe the hopes, ambiguities and frictions that come along with development. Development for most of the Agta members is not only about money or material things, it also means a means to finding the recognition of society as modern citizens. This recognition presents frictions: on one hand, for the members to get the approval of the CADT, my Agta informants need to prove there are a traditional and homogenous community. Simultaneously, to find recognition by "others" my informants employ contrary tools (such as following formal education or engaging in tourism) with the expectation of being recognised as first-class citizens. This friction results in my Agta informants' positioning of themselves as part of the cosmopolitan world, by strengthening their communal identity as Agta but simultaneously distancing themselves from aspects of that identity which mostly the youth consider backward.

Tourism gives the Agta a way to position themselves as proper citizens. Small-scale tourism gives a feeling of control and power to the adults and young Agta involved. While the members wish to continue the tourism on Palaui Island, they wish to do so at a scale they feel they can manage. The primary reasons for opposing the Master Plan are the risks of losing their livelihood or being resettled. While my informants would like the economic benefits, jobs, and training that CEZA promises, they do not trust their words. Moreover, members also anticipate that Palaui Island will look ugly with big infrastructures, or that dangerous people will arrive. Additionally, some other members refer to the environmental impact, like rubbish and pollution of the water.

At the level of State actors their mandates contradict and overlap. The DENR's mandates aim to protect the environment sustainably. That is why it has divided the Island between a multiple use zone and a zone that is strictly protected, but through which CEZA, which also claims to follow the principles of ecotourism, is planning to build a cable car. The CEZA legitimises its constructions all over Santa Ana by asserting they will bring prosperity to the region. The Master Plan for Palaui Island attracts international investments and promises to bring tourists from around the world. However, these opportunities come along with the possible exclusion of the inhabitants of Palaui Island from economic benefits and access to the lands where they belong. Therefore, inhabitants from Palaui Island (both Agta and non-Agta) do not see this project as an improvement to their lives.

Finally, by looking at multiple layers of Agta's desires and fears for the future in the uncertain context produced by overlapping mandates, I hope I address how new open-ended futures also open up. Future research on implementing the Master Plan, will shine light on how policies are being implemented into practice, and how the Agta are engaging with modification of the Island - especially at a time when in the Agta's words, "our future could be prosperous if we secure our ancestral lands". All in all, this research can contribute to debates on development,

land rights, eco-tourism, and indigenous people. Furthermore, it shed light on the link between the local island of Palau Island to the larger context of indigeneity and large-scale tourist attractions.

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