

## Chapter 21

# It's More Fun in the Philippines? The Challenges of Tourism

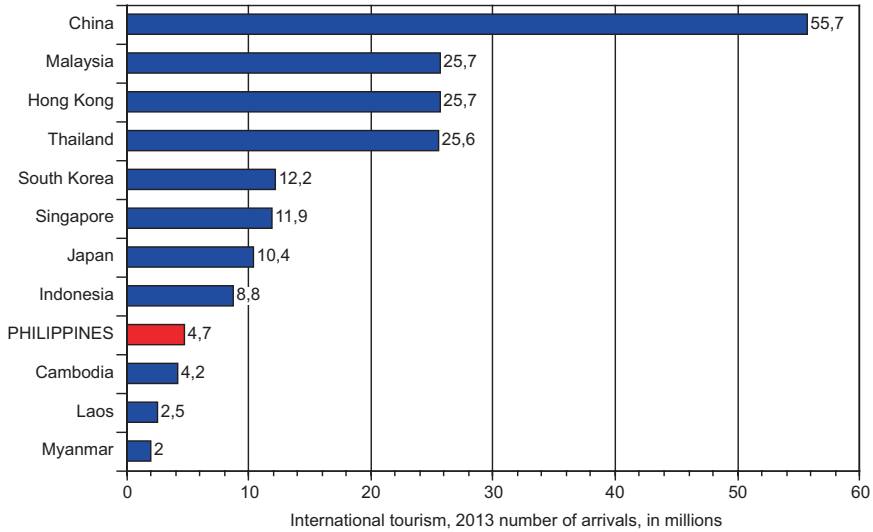
**Abstract** The Philippines have been in recent years a minor destination of international tourism flows, especially from Europe. Most visitors are Asians (Korea, Japan), Americans or Australians. This chapter examines some strengths of the Philippines in terms of tourism potentials (landscapes, undersea diving, cultural heritage), then its organizational and infrastructural weaknesses (transportation), as well as the lack of proper maintenance of tourism assets and the overcrowding of Boracay island, before examining the tourism policies of the national government (the successful “Its more fun in the Philippines” campaign, development of gambling, medical tourism and ecotourism). Four case studies in Bohol (diving and ecotourism), Laguna province (perimetropolitan resorts at a short distance from Manila), Batanes islands (non-tropical landscapes of a remote archipelago) and the rice terraces of Ifugao country in northern Luzon illustrate the diversity of tourism options in the Philippines around the dominant concept of sustainable tourism.

**Keywords** Tourism—SWOT analysis • UNESCO heritage • Ecotourism • Promotional campaigns

As a tourist destination, the Philippine archipelago is loaded with the attractions travelers dream of: tropical islands (Parrocha 2014), white sand beaches, world-class scenery, a superb potential for undersea diving, friendly outgoing locals who can speak English, a Latin culture unique in Asia, and large international style shopping malls in Manila. Yet for all its advantages, including low-cost accommodations, the country attracts few international travelers, when tourism should be one of the stars of the Philippine economy.

Data from the World Tourism Organization show the mediocre status of international tourism in the Philippine archipelago, ranked only 50th in the world for the number of foreign visitors. In the East/Southeast Asia realm, other countries such as China, Thailand or Malaysia, as well as tiny Hong Kong, Macau and Singapore, dwarf the Philippines (Logarta 2013) (Fig. 21.1).

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Philippines for tourism? What are its opportunities and challenges? Many academics, journalists and professional analysts have looked at some of the problems facing the Philippines tourist industry while trying to ascertain solutions in the future. Many weaknesses are frequently



**Fig. 21.1** Number of foreign visitors in selected East and Southeast Asian countries (Source: International Tourism Organization)

mentioned: a history of under-investment, weak promotion and security troubles. A fuzzy image darkened by negative reports on the country (insecurity, terrorism, poverty, natural calamities) and mediocre infrastructures, starting with Manila's airport, are in sharp contrast with some neighboring countries.

In 2013, the World Economic Forum's Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report reported the Philippines ranking 16th regionally and 81st among 130 countries surveyed (Dumpit-Murillo 2014). According to WEF, the country's comparative strengths were its natural resources (44th) and its price competitiveness (24th), but a number of areas have been holding back the potential of the Philippines. The report quoted the difficulty of starting a business in the country, in both cost and length of the business process (ranked 94th and 117th, respectively); safety and security concerns (103rd); inadequate health and hygiene (94th); underdeveloped ground transport, tourism, and IT infrastructure; and the availability of qualified labor (108th).

This may be changing with the successful "It's more fun in the Philippines" branding campaign launched in 2012 and the strong push for casinos, ecotourism and medical tourism. However, the underspending on transportation infrastructures will not allow for a rapid improvement of the tourist experience. Opportunities for tourism expansion opened by the coming economic integration of ASEAN may be hampered by threats such as the strained political relations with China and Hong Kong and the slow movement of Philippine bureaucracy to open the country to foreign investments in tourism. However, the Philippines may benefit from the experience of other countries such as Thailand that had difficulties managing huge flows of tourists (Rodolfo 2003).

## 21.1 Visitors to the Philippines

Most tourists to the Philippines come from neighboring Asian countries, South Korea alone providing a quarter of all visitors (Zabal 2016). In 2014, Koreans were 24.3% of the visitors in the Philippines, followed by Americans (14.9%), Japanese (9.6%) and Mainland Chinese (8.3%). These four countries account for almost 60% of visitors in the Philippines.<sup>1</sup> Data for the first half of 2015 (Arnaldo 2015a, b, c, d) confirm this trend (Korea 27.6%, USA 17.8%, Japan 10.2%, China 8.2%) (Fig. 21.2). Year-to-year variations in the numbers of foreign arrivals may be linked to events in competing countries (political unrest in Thailand), introductory fares by airlines starting to serve the Philippines from new markets (*Ethiopian Airlines* and *Turkish Airlines* in 2015) or even El Niño- induced weather variability (Saverimuttu and Varua 2014).

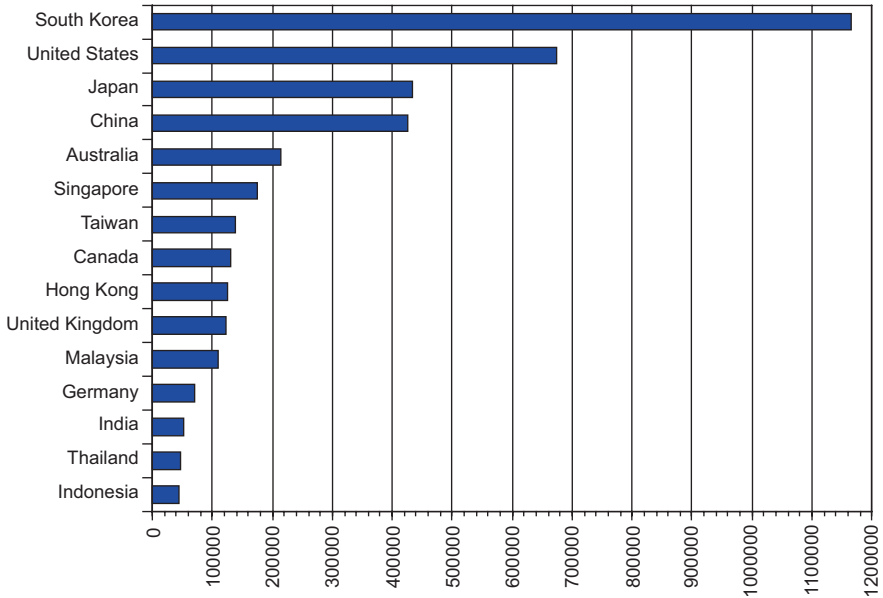
The number of Korean tourists in the Philippines is increasing steadily: there were 600,000 in 2008, the number almost doubled 5 years later (Esplanada 2012; Oiga 2012; Guéguen 2013). These tourism flows are also part of a new context: the Philippines has experienced good rates of economic growth since 2010 and are banking on their relative proximity to see the tourist demand from neighboring states to intensify. There is also the desire to change the tourism image of the country by shedding off sex tourism,<sup>2</sup> which had in particular taken the form of male business trips organized from Japan or Korea in the 1980s and 1990s .

Due to former colonial ties and the long presence of US military bases, Americans come in second place, also partly on the account of sexual tourism oriented to the clubs and bars of sections of Manila and the former military hub of Angeles City (Jeffreys 1999).

A striking characteristic of international tourism in the Philippines is the small presence of Europeans: 2.6% British (10th place), 1.5% Germans (12th), 0.9% French (16th). In most cases, a Western visitor is always considered as American, and greeted with an ubiquitous “hey Joe”, while many Filipinos are surprised to learn other Westerners may be visiting their country. However, a number of provinces, especially in the Visayas (Blijleven and Van Naerssen 2001) and Ilocos (Palafox 2016), try to promote tourism to European visitors, focusing in particular

<sup>1</sup>The tourism industry is adapting to this dominant influx of Asian visitors by emphasizing training in the Korean, Japanese and Chinese languages, in addition to English which is widely spoken all around the country (Andrade 2015).

<sup>2</sup>As in Thailand and Cambodia, sex tourism in the Philippines has evolved in successive stages. After indigenous prostitution, when women were subjected to concubinage within the patriarchal nature of most Asian societies, economic colonialism and militarization formalized prostitution as a mechanism of dominance meeting the sexual demands of occupation forces (primarily American and Japanese in the Philippines). International tourists later replaced occupation forces, and prostitution/sex tourism became a tool for obtaining foreign currency in a context of rapid economic development where sex workers, male or female, can be seen as a commodity, while the poor find a quick way to much-needed money by selling their bodies. A disturbing trend is the rise in child sex tourism, starting with webcam specializing in “kid porn” and sometimes leading to physical encounters between pedophiles and their victims (Mercene 2015).



**Fig. 21.2** Top 15 nations of visitors in the Philippines, 2013 (Source: Philippine Department of Tourism)

on heritage tourism. New visitors markets, which are actively pursued, include Pacific Russia (charter flights to Vladivostok and Khabarovsk), Turkey (new flights from Istanbul on *Turkish Airlines*) and Israel (Arnaldo 2015a, b, c, d).

Because the Philippines is an archipelago, almost all visitors arrive by air, with Manila Airport being the dominant point of entry (72.5%) followed by Cebu (14.4%), Kalibo (Boracay, 8.6%) and Clark Airport in Pampanga (3%) (Arnaldo 2015a, b, c, d). A large part of the foreign tourists are actually going to the Philippines to visit friends and family (the families of their Filipino spouses and partners). They will mostly stay at the family's places and not spend a lot of time in hotels, except when in Manila on their way to provinces.

## 21.2 Assets of the Philippines for Tourism

The country has a number of tourism resources able to attract a substantial number of visitors. The Philippines has timeless competitive advantages. It is near North Asia, which is composed of the rich sources of tourists: China, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, and Hong Kong. The country has world-class natural attractions.

As a tropical archipelago, it can play the sun, sand and sea tourism card. Some of the most famous seaside resorts (Franz 1985) of the archipelago include the white sand beaches of Boracay Island (off the northern coast of Panay) (De La Cruz 2012;

Corrales 2014), Panglao (Bohol), Pagudpud (Ilocos Norte) and Caccnipa Island (Palawan), Palau Island (Santa Ana, Cagayan) (Domingo 2015), several dive/snorkeling sites on coral reefs and their underwater fauna and flora (Anilao in Batangas province south of Manila, Cabilao Island in Bohol, Malapascua and Moalboal in Cebu, Apo Island and Dauin in Negros, Alona Beach in Bohol, Honda Bay and Coron/Busuanga in Palawan) (Galvez 2014; Ong 2014; Pellicer 2015). People can swim with manta rays and whale sharks (*butanding*) off the coast of Donsol in Sorsogon Province (Bicol). Some areas with limited beaches have been transformed with the construction of artificial sand beaches, such as the rocky coast of Mactan Island near Cebu (Wong 1999). However, climate change (Dearden and Manopawitr 2011; Maguidad et al. 2013) and sea-level rise may be long-term threats to the development of coastal tourism in the Philippines, as they are for other places.

Other sites of interest are linked to peculiar geological features, such as Bohol's Chocolate Hills, home of the endemic tarsier (*Tarsius syrichta*),<sup>3</sup> the smallest of all primates, caves in Sagada (Mountain province of northern Luzon), El Nido's limestone cliffs and Puerto Princesa's underground River in Palawan (De Vivo et al. 2013), the Hundred Islands National Park in Alaminos (Pangasinan), Pagsanjan waterfalls (Laguna) and many volcanic landscapes (Lake Taal near Manila, Mt Pinatubo, Mt Mayon, Camiguin Island) (Pastrano 2015).

Cultural tourism will focus on the Spanish architectural heritage (Henderson 2012): Intramuros in Manila (Medrana 2015), the city of Vigan in Ilocos Sur, the churches of Bohol, old bridges (Calurasan 2015), and on the multiple religious festivals (Pottier 1977; Cruz-Lucero 2006; Galang 2012; Valdez 2014), food festivals (Sabanpan-Yu 2007; Buted 2014), ethnic festivals (Roa 2015), dance festivals (Luna Pison 2013) and local fiestas (Ceballos 1975; Magpantay et al. 2014) organized across the country since Spanish colonial times (Wendt 1998), among them the Sinulog in Cebu City<sup>4</sup> and the Quiapo Festival (Venida 2002) of the Black Nazarene held in Manila every January. Other events include the Giant Lantern Festival in San Fernando, Pampanga (Manabat 2015), Kuraldal in Sasmuan, Pampanga (Piñeda Tiatco 2012), Ati-Atihan in Aklan (Calopez et al. 2011; Peterson 2011, Pastrana Nabor 2015), Agawan, Mayohan and Pahiyas in Quezon (Guevarra et al. 2014), Anilag, Ana Kalang and Turumba in Laguna, Ina/Our Lady of Peñafrancia (Naga) and Tumatarok (Minalabac) in Camarines Sur (Adiova 2014), Kaamulan in Bukidnon, Dinagyang in Iloilo, Masskara in Bacolod, Negros, Lanzones Festival in Camiguin, Panagbenga Festival of Flowers in Baguio (Paredes-Canilao et al. 2014), Bañamos in Los Baños (Luna 2015), Kadayawan in Davao, Moriones in Marinduque

<sup>3</sup>A typical one day tour in Bohol from Cebu (90 min trip in fast catamaran) includes a lunch buffet cruise on the Loboc River, followed by a visit of the Chocolate Hills, of the Bohol Butterfly Habitat Conservation Center and the tarsier sanctuary, ending with a visit of the Baclayon church near the port city of Tagbilaran.

<sup>4</sup>Held every January, Sinulog—one of the grandest festivals in the Philippines—aims to connect the country's rich pagan history with its Christian traditions. The first Santo Niño was a baptismal gift by Ferdinand Magellan, while The Sinulog dance is said to originate from the court of Rajah Humabon (Sala-Boza 2008).



**Fig. 21.3** Bagumbayan (Rizal Park, Manila): the commemoration of Jose Rizal's execution (August 2015 photo)

(Peterson 2007b). A very unusual event is the gruesome crucifixions performed in San Pedro Cutud (Pampanga) on Good Friday (Bräunlein 2009).

In Manila, the memory of national hero Jose Rizal is well preserved in Rizal Park, located next to the walled city of Intramuros (Fig. 21.3). In Cebu, some of the interesting sites are the Shrine of Magellan's Cross which was planted by the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan's men upon his arrival in Cebu in 1521; the Basilica Minore del Sto. Niño where the oldest image of the Christ Child is enshrined and a Taoist Temple guarded by fierce dragons where the local Chinese go to pray. Several Spanish-era buildings have been dismantled from their original location in Manila and transported/reconstructed to a new site in Bagac, Bataan (Rico 2015), while Imelda Marcos, when she was First Lady of the Philippines and governor of Greater Manila, directed the construction of Casa Manila, a copy of an 1850s merchant house, which serves as a museum of colonial Manila in the heart of Intramuros. Local governments in the Philippines, such as Batangas province (Buted et al. 2014a, b, c), are quite active in promoting local heritage (Peterson 2007a), tangible or intangible. In this maritime archipelagic nation, heritage can even be found underwater (Orillaneda and Ronquillo 2011, Jago-On 2015), mostly in the form of sunken ships giving new insights on the early settlement of the islands, colonial trade and World War II (Goddio et al. 2014). A number of churches (Tejero 2015) and old houses have been restored across the country, albeit with some criticism regarding the methods and styles of renovation (Jore 2015). Some historical structures have been turned into local history museums, such as in Carcar, Cebu

(Mansueto and Montesclaros 2015). The widespread use of social media by Filipinos is an asset to disseminate information about local little-known treasures (Buted et al. 2014a, b, c).

Six Philippine properties are currently<sup>5</sup> inscribed on the UNESCO's World Heritage List. The Philippines fares quite well in comparison to neighboring countries, with 6 World Heritage sites, versus 8 each in Vietnam and Indonesia, 5 in Thailand, 4 in Malaysia, 2 each in Laos and Cambodia, 1 each in Myanmar and Singapore.

Three are in the "natural" realm: the Tubbataha Reef Marine Park (1993), the Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park (1999) and the Mt Hamiguitan Range Wildlife sanctuary in Davao (2014) (Ranada 2014; Regalado 2014).

The Tubbataha Reef Marine Park covers 130,028 ha, including the North and South Reefs. It is a unique example of an atoll reef with a very high density of marine species; the North Islet serving as a nesting site for birds and marine turtles. The site is an excellent example of a pristine coral reef with a spectacular 100-m perpendicular wall, extensive lagoons and two coral islands.

Puerto Princesa's Subterranean River National Park features a spectacular limestone karst landscape with an underground river. One of the river's distinguishing features is that it emerges directly into the sea, and its lower portion is subject to tidal influences. The area also represents a significant habitat for biodiversity conservation. The site contains a full 'mountain-to-sea' ecosystem and has some of the most important forests in Asia. It has also been designated as one of the New 7 Wonders of Nature, leading to more investment in tourism development (Dressler 2011; Enriquez 2011; Villamente 2011).

The more than 16,000-ha Hamiguitan mountain park runs from north to south along the Pujada Peninsula in the Eastern Mindanao Biodiversity Corridor. Its peak is more than 1600 m above sea level. This protected area boasts the largest "pygmy forest," a field of bonsai trees estimated to be around 100 years old. This unique forest (Amoroso and Aspiras 2011) occupies around 225 ha of the sanctuary. The mountain is home to the critically endangered Philippine eagle and Philippine cockatoo, as well as golden crown flying foxes (*Acerodon jubatus*, a large bat) and Philippine warty pigs (*Sus philippinensis*) (Fig. 21.4).

Three UNESCO properties in the Philippines are in the "cultural" realm. They are the historic town of Vigan (1999), the Rice terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras (1995) and the Baroque Churches of the Philippines (1993) located in four different spots: Paoay Church (Ilocos Norte), Santa Maria Church (Ilocos Sur), Miagao Church (Iloilo), San Agustin Church (Intramuros, Manila).

Established in 1572 as Villa Fernandina, in honor of the first son of King Philip II of Spain, then renamed Ciudad Fernandina de Vigan, Vigan<sup>6</sup> is the best-preserved example (Amarga Leyco 2014; Ciriaco 2015) of a planned Spanish colonial town in

<sup>5</sup> Mexico and the Philippines have teamed up to support the transnational nomination of the historic Manila-Acapulco Galleon Trade route to the World Heritage List.

<sup>6</sup> There are different interpretations about this name: it may be derived from the lush Bigaa tuber, a species of the taro family, or it may be a deformation of the Minnan dialect's "bee gan" (beautiful shore), a description given by Chinese sailors, while some Spanish texts of the time describe a Vigan river (now called the Mestizo river), which reflects the mixing of Filipinos and Chinese populations.

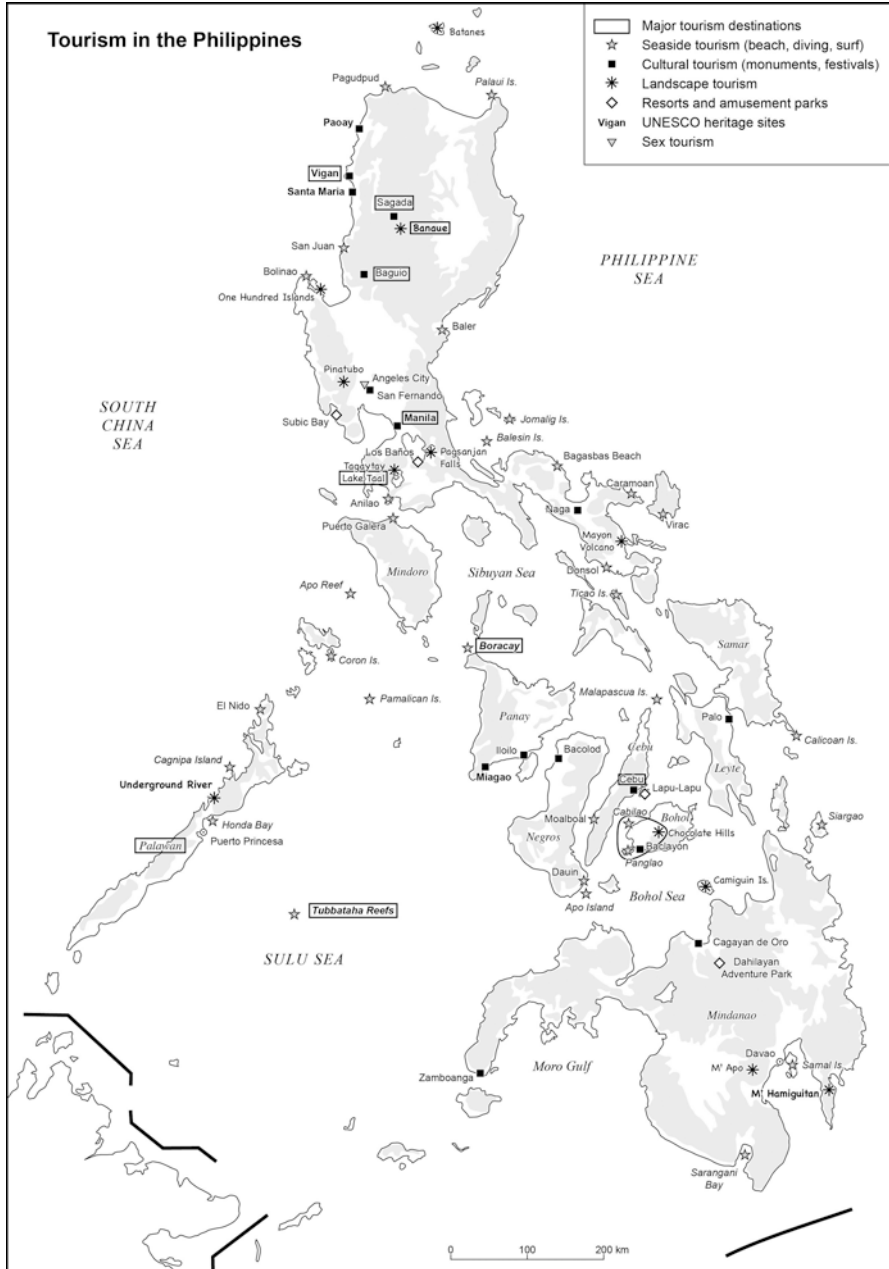


Fig. 21.4 Tourism in the Philippines





**Fig. 21.5** Calle Crisologo in Vigan (April 2016)

Asia. Its architecture reflects the coming together of cultural elements from elsewhere in the Philippines, from China and from Europe, resulting in a culture and townscape that have no parallel anywhere in East and South-East Asia. It has also been designated in 2014 as one of the New 7 Wonders Cities (Lazaro 2014; Barcelo 2015; Tejada 2015).<sup>7</sup> It is hoped that this distinction, coming after UNESCO's recognition, will draw even more visitors to the city and the Ilocos region (Locsin 2015). Vigan, a former island surrounded by three bodies of water (the Bantay, Mestizo and Vantes rivers), offers river cruises to visitors, pointing to the significance of waterways throughout the colorful history of this important trading post, where many galleons stopped between Manila and China. The city is trying to keep alive the image of Spanish Philippines, with its calesa rides and cobblestone streets (Calle Crisologo), succeeding much better than the decrepit Intramuros in central Manila (Fig. 21.5).

The four churches, the first of which was built by the Spanish in the late sixteenth century, present a unique architectural style, which is a reinterpretation of European Baroque by Chinese and Philippine craftsmen.

Beyond these “stars” of Philippine tourism resources, the country offers other beaches, churches (De Castro et al. 2014) and sites of interesting biodiversity across

<sup>7</sup> Other cities selected by popular online survey were Beirut, Doha, Durban, Havana, Kuala Lumpur and La Paz. The high popularity of online social networks among Filipinos (<https://www.facebook.com/ViganForNew7WondersCitiesOfTheWorld>), was one of the main factors of Vigan's selection (<http://ph-gov.blogspot.com/2014/09/vote-vigan-as-one-of-new7wonders-cities.html>).

the archipelago, from the Bataan peninsula near Manila (Supnad 2015) to Palau (Cagayan province) in northern Luzon (Domingo 2015) to Iloilo in the Visayas (Pelasol et al. 2012) and other places. The volcanic nature of the archipelago has allowed for the development of hot springs resorts as in Laguna province, especially in Los Baños at the foot of Mt Makiling in the southern vicinity of Greater Manila.

A comparative advantage of the Philippines is that the country, not being a major tourist destination at this time, is not suffering much from tourism overcrowding, except maybe on the island of Boracay (Ranada 2013; Oiga 2014b; Aguirre 2015), where uncontrolled growth needs to be tamed (Trousedale 1998) and occasionally in Baguio and Cebu.

### 21.3 The Weaknesses of Philippine Tourism Development

Given its abundance of tourism resources, why is the Philippines not a major destination for world tourism? Several factors can explain it: a negative perception of the Philippines by foreign visitors (warfare, insecurity, crime), the insufficient development of transport infrastructures and tourism facilities, including hotels and restaurants, a relative neglect of touristic assets, the absence of an entrenched culture of tourism, high excise taxes on jet fuel, all being the result of a weak tourism policy for many years (Lagman 2008; Henderson 2011; Remo 2014a).

Why come to the Philippines? One of the biggest problems facing tourism in the Philippines may be the incessantly negative portrayals of the country used by foreign media which have damaged the country's image, detracting many would-be tourists from even coming to the Philippines, in preference of the traditional Southeast Asian destinations (Bali, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam). For the Philippines, advice against travel to some parts of Mindanao has been constant and common. Reports of warfare in Mindanao, chaos in Tacloban after the 2013 typhoon or beggar children in Manila tend to affect the choices of many would-be travelers (Richter 2003), who would rather go to destinations with less obvious signs of a financially contrasted society. The U.S. State Department has long been a thorn in the side of the Philippines' tourism industry for consistently issuing dire travel warnings. Posted on its official site in January 2012, a typical alarm began with the ominous admonition, "The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of terrorist activity in the Philippines". "The Philippines is a volcano-, typhoon-, flood-, and earthquake-prone country" was another element of its warning about possible dangers that await the unlucky.

If tourists ever do make it to the Philippines, they often are baffled on where to go, what to see, what to do etc., due to the Philippine government's minimal efforts to improve national infrastructure (airport/expressway building, rail system etc.) in contrast to more tourist-friendly neighbors like Thailand or Malaysia, which already have the necessary infrastructure and economic stability needed to build on their tourism departments. A lack of budget for the tourism department means there are no walk-in Tourist Information Centers or detailed brochures outside of a few sites

in Manila. The hotel capacity of the country outside of Manila is quite limited and renting a car is almost impossible outside of the capital region.

Transportation is a problem as well (Cruz 2015; Marasigan 2015a, b). Philippine airports, particularly NAIA (Ninoy Aquino International Airport serving Greater Manila), are not up-to-par with other facilities in the region (Singapore's Changi, Hong Kong's Chek Lap Kok, Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi, Kuala Lumpur International Airport...). Overcrowded and undersized, the principal gateway to the Philippines has been consistently ranked among the worst airports in the world. Seventy percent of visitors to the Philippines come in through the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, the primary port of entry. Given the poor interconnection from NAIA to tourist destinations in the north and south, tourists' complaints about the difficulty of reaching their destinations abound.

Plane tickets, which are comparatively more expensive due to the imposition of the excise tax on aviation fuel, only make airfares more expensive for tourists traveling to the Philippines. It is one of the reasons why most European airlines (*Lufthansa*, *British Airways*, *Air France*) have stopped flying into the Philippines. People who do arrive at the country's international gateways—Manila, Mactan-Cebu, Kalibo, Clark, Davao, Laoag, Puerto Princesa—face inadequate air, sea and road connectivity to reach their holiday destinations. Once arrived in Manila, there is indeed no convenient system of hotel shuttles or urban rail connection to the city. Tourists have to settle for poorly maintained taxis that increase fares when encountering tourists. What to say or do whilst riding jeepneys or tricycles is well known by Filipinos, but is not given much attention by the few travel books written about the country. Many roads in the provinces are in poor condition and some promising sites cannot be reached by road. Construction plans for “tourism roads” (Burgonio 2013, Mirabuena and Yujuico 2014), such as the 88 km-long TPLEX reducing the time travel from Manila to Baguio (See 2015) to just 3 h, have been only partially implemented (Marasigan 2015a, b).

Another negative is the lack of pedestrian safety. Streets are dangerous to cross due to the aggressive driving style of jeepney and bus drivers as well as other motorists (Salazar 2015). Sidewalks are often in bad shape, and encumbered by beggars and vendors (Yotsumoto 2013), restricting the flow of pedestrians and facilitating the work of pickpockets. Maybe due to the hot humid climate, Filipinos are not too keen on walking outdoors and are much more comfortable with the “mall culture” present in North America. With a lack of the middle-classes using the sidewalks, many streetside gangs use them as bases to pester or mug pedestrians. Muggings are known to have happened to mostly East Asian tourists who had assumed that walking to their destinations in Manila or Cebu City would be as safe as in their origin countries, Japan, Korea or Taiwan.

Crime is not the only problem. There is a pervasive sense that corruption thrives at every level of Philippine society and that crime solving is not a major priority. What may scare off the tourists is not so much a lack of security, as a lack of quality (Satake 2015) and maintenance, including dirty toilets in many places (Dagooc 2014), and a deficit of image.

There is no ancient city in the Philippines that could compare with Angkor, Ayutthaya, Borobudur or Pagan. The capital city Manila has no grandiose royal



**Fig. 21.6** Manila's cathedral (Intramuros) (August 2015)

palace like Beijing or Bangkok. It has no grandiose cathedrals as in Cologne, Milan or Paris, and nothing like the Eiffel Tower, the Golden Gate Bridge or Sydney's Opera House. Filipino art museums have little to offer compared with their European or American counterparts. Despite its fine churches and historical significance, Intramuros, the old Spanish city, cannot be a major tourist attraction if the streets are littered with trash and the visitors endlessly disturbed by beggar children (Hsieh 2013) (Fig. 21.6).

Beautiful buildings of the American colonial period near Intramuros are also in a sad state of disrepair, as exemplified by the Metropolitan Theater (Ranada 2015; Maclang 2016). The buildings badly damaged by massive bombing on the capital in 1945 have not been repaired properly. Like Old Jakarta, the original center of Manila desperately needs redevelopment by renovation (Silao and Eugenio 1978). Efforts are done today to improve the tourist experience by limiting motorized traffic within the old town, but there is still a lot to do to make Intramuros a pleasant area to visit, except near Manila's cathedral and inside Fort Santiago.

Historical churches have not always been restored adequately: most churches in Luzon built during the Spanish colonial era were erected from blocks of carved adobe, but repairs were often made using modern cement, a material wholly incompatible with adobe (Caruncho 2015). Many have suffered through earthquakes (Yu and Oreta 2014), as happened in Bohol in 2013.

Filipino food does not have the great international reputation of Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese, Japanese, Indian or even Korean food. Critics describe much of the

Philippines' cuisine as focused on relatively mundane meals and fast food, which may be why there is a scarcity of Filipino restaurants abroad. The Philippines' top beach resort, Boracay Island, is regularly troubled by power cuts. People are known to be very friendly but contrary to Singapore where excellence is the norm, the Philippines has been described as "out of service with a smile" (McLean 2003; Ehrlich 2012; Magkilat 2014; Remo 2014a). As for the rice terraces of the Northern Cordillera, they are in much poorer shape than the ones seen in Bali or Southwest China.

In the end, the most decisive matter in the tourism industry's weak successes with the Philippines is that after more than 30 years without large numbers of tourists, the government and its people may no longer see their country as a major tourist destination and no efforts have been made to make the country more tourist friendly outside of closed resorts and limited sites. Efforts to change the country's image in local and international media have fallen on deaf ears. The country did not seem to advertise itself well enough for the Western markets, and was focusing its efforts on maintaining its comfortable flow of "weekend tourists" from neighboring Asian countries.

## 21.4 Opportunities and Pro-Tourism Policies

Lately, however, the Philippine government seems to have realized the need to promote the country better. It has launched a successful international campaign around the slogan "It's more fun in the Philippines". At the same time, ASEAN integration (Ariff 2005) is bound to offer more opportunities for inbound—and outbound—tourism with the progressive building of a Southeast community where travel will be easier from one country to the other (Wong et al. 2011a, b), with the push of the Philippines for a single tourist visa valid for all ASEAN countries (Remo 2014b; Yap 2014; Kerdechuen 2015; Arnaldo 2016), somehow comparable to the Schengen free travel policy in Europe. The growth of Chinese outbound tourism will combine with growing travel from Russia and Turkey, as recent air agreements have shown the potential. Visa-free travel to the Philippines has been extended from 21 to 30 days. This accommodation is granted to over 150 countries; however, because of Filipinos' reputation to go on TNT status,<sup>8</sup> the gesture isn't reciprocated by most nations, and travel outside of Asia is difficult, especially to Europe.

The widespread use of English and the Internet freedom experienced in the Philippines, even with speeds still too low, are good omens for attracting more foreigners, while the country is also focusing on niche markets: diving, gambling and medical tourism.

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<sup>8</sup>Tago Nang Tago, "in perpetual hiding", is the popular Filipino expression for undocumented, illegal migrants.

### 21.4.1 *More Fun in the Philippines*

Creating a brand for a country goes beyond a catchy slogan (Wallace 2011; Salazar 2013; Ilagan 2016). Destination branding is about powerful images and goes beyond tourism. It is also about a nation's politics, economy and security. In January 2012, the Philippine Department of Tourism launched a global campaign under the simple yet memorable slogan "It's More Fun in the Philippines".<sup>9</sup> The six-word slogan was in response to the country's need for a simple line that was "easily understood, competitive and differentiated" and one that would help the Philippines get a larger share of the tourism market (Uy 2012). Raising awareness of the country as a tourism destination and establishing favorable perceptions of the Philippines were the main objectives of the campaign, as many foreigners remain unaware of the Philippines. With limited financial resources, the Department of Tourism relied heavily on social media, inviting Internet users to upload photographs of both popular and less well-known Philippine holiday destinations and adding words to the now popular slogan (Fig. 21.7). The campaign has so far been successful (Gatdula 2012; Hogaza 2014) as much of the user-created content went viral within hours, catching the attention of the international media as well as high numbers of potential inbound arrivals. This new branding of the Philippines (Torres 2011) came on the heels of the botched branding campaign "Pilipinas Kay Ganda" ("Philippines how beautiful"), where the use of tagalog language made it unintelligible for foreigners in a world tourism market, while at the same time, according to feminist groups, it seemed to advertise beautiful Filipina women, presumably for sex. That short-term branding was supposed to replace the existing "WOW Philippines" made popular by former Tourism Secretary and senator Richard Gordon. Filipinos had accepted it because it reflected their typical reaction ("wow") when discovering something beautiful and rare. The campaign used powerful images, a catchy slogan, and a memorable theme song. However, the Philippines may need an icon to create its brand, such as the Eiffel tower for Paris.

"Fun" is what drives the current popularity of zip lines across the Philippines (Jennings 2014), where thrill seekers can take advantage of the mountainous areas to experience a birds-eye view of landscapes while gliding through a cable wire at speeds over 50 km/h. More than 20 have been put in services, such as in Lake Sebu (Cotabato, Mindanao), the highest in Asia (700 m), Dahilayan Adventure Park (Bukidnon, Mindanao), Delta Discovery park (Agusan del Norte, Mindanao), Lignon Hill Nature Park next to Mt Mayon (Albay province in Bicol), Tagaytay Ridge Zipline offering views of Lake Taal near Manila, Balungao Hilltop Adventure (Pangasinan), Subic Bay Tree Top Adventure (Olongapo, Zambales) or Sogod (Southern Leyte), among others. This clearly makes the Philippines the leader in Southeast Asia for this kind of leisure, but most of these lines have been built privately without much support from local authorities.

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<sup>9</sup>[www.itsmorefuninthephilippines.com/](http://www.itsmorefuninthephilippines.com/)



Fig. 21.7 It's more fun in the Philippines promotional material

### 21.4.2 Diving

The Philippines could be to scuba divers what Switzerland is to skiers, Hawaii to surfers<sup>10</sup> and Nepal to mountaineers: the place one must visit at least once to get the real heart of the sport. The tropical waters surrounding the Philippines 7107 islands host a spectacular underwater wildlife diversity. Crystal clear waters up to 60 m allows the discovery of shipwrecks (Subic Bay, Zambales and Coron Bay, Palawan), underwater cliffs populated with sponges, colorful corals, gorgonians, turtles, sharks, rays, and rarely seen fishes like Spanish Dancer, harlequin ghost-pipefish, camouflaged frogfish and fire gobies. Major diving sports can be found around the archipelago, from Anilao (Batangas) and Canyons and Sabang Bay in Puerto Galera (Mindoro), a short distance from Manila, to Taiei Maru (Coron), Yapak 2 and Crocodile Island (Boracay), Ticao (Masbate), The Pier and Apo Island in Dumaguete, Danjugan and Dauin (Negros) (Oracion 2007), Apo Reef (Occidental Mindoro), Monad Shoal in Malapascua (Cebu), Panglao and Cabilao islands (Bohol), Sarangani Bay (Mindanao), Honda Bay and Tubbataha Reef (Palawan).

Most islands in the Philippines cater to divers of all levels of experience. Operators (often foreigners) engaged with technical diving are well equipped with

<sup>10</sup>There are also a number of surfing spots on the Philippine coastlines (see map).

emergency equipment and other necessities. Dive centers in the Philippines are certified by agencies for maintaining their standards of safety and professionalism. Scuba diving courses are also endorsed by certifying agencies. The Philippine Department of Tourism is intent on making diving one of the top tools of its international promotion (Codilla 2013), for example with international trade shows such as World Deep (Diving Expo and Exhibition Philippines) held in 2013 in Cebu and the 2015 DRT Show (Diving Resort Travel) in SM Mall of Asia (Pasay). Government officials estimate that up to 15% of foreign visitors come to the Philippines for diving and the revenue in diving makes up a quarter of the total tourism revenue. Divers tend to stay longer and have a lot of activities included in their regular tourism, which make them excellent customers for the country's tourism industry.

However, the expansion of dive tourism (Kuklok 2012) may lead to problems in protected areas (Barker and Roberts 2004) of fragile coral reefs (Nolan and Rotherham 2012) and also to conflicts with fishermen in a context of dwindling marine resources, as has been shown for example in the case of Cebu (Lucas and Kirit 2009) or the Calamianes islands (Fabinyi 2008, 2010). Similar questions may be raised about surfriding (Porter et al. 2015).

Can sustainability and biodiversity conservation coexist with tourism? (White and Rosales 2003; Thiele et al. 2005; Catibog-Sinha 2010) Could user fees be a solution (Tongson and Dygico 2004; Jolejole and Briones 2010), at the risk of social inequities in the access to sites of natural beauty?

### 21.4.3 *Gambling*

Metro Manila, where a quarter of the population lives below the poverty line, aims to establish itself as one of the global destinations in gambling, competing with Macau and Las Vegas (Salcedo-Posadas 2011; Cohen 2014b; Lazo 2015; Palaña 2015; Venzon 2015). Recent aggressive efforts by authorities in China and Macau to curb money-laundering in Macau casinos have resulted in losses for the sector as high rollers stayed home, or looked for alternative destinations like Singapore, Cambodia or the Philippines (Chan 2012; Huber 2015; Lucas 2015). In the Philippines, the development of large resorts is cheaper (land costs, accommodations), leading the gaming industry to invest in Manila for mass market gamers, as well as entertainment, convention tourism and possibly boxing with the popularity of local champion Manny Pacquiao.

The government-controlled Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) was established in 1976 by president Ferdinand Marcos with the goal of regulating the gambling industry in the country. Prior to 1976, illegal gambling dominated the Philippines (unlicensed casinos, underground bookmaking operations, jueteng<sup>11</sup>). Gambling and betting are a heritage of Spanish colonization (Bankoff

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<sup>11</sup> Jueteng is an illegal numbers game originated from China. The Spanish colonial authorities had introduced it in the Philippines in the 1800s as a franchise of the governor-general in Manila.



1991; Lagman 2013), firmly implanted in Filipino culture (Matejowsky 2003). Casinos in the Philippines are taxed less than their regional competitors, advertising for gambling establishments is legal and authorities do not pose any obstacle to their attendance by local citizens, unlike South Korea and Macau (near total ban), Malaysia (prohibition for Muslims) or Singapore (prohibitive entrance fee).

In 1977, PAGCOR opened its first casino, The Manila Bay Casino, a floating facility controlled by Macau's gambling tycoon Stanley Ho. A fire destroyed the ship in 1979, leading to the establishment of land-based casinos. There are now about 20 casinos in the Manila area, some under the brand Casino Filipino in low-income neighborhoods, some in luxury hotels near Manila's waterfront (Pan Pacific Hotel, New World Manila Bay Hotel in Malate). At the edge of Chinatown in the Santa Cruz district of Manila, the Manila Grand Opera Hotel, once a theater that served as the center of Philippine culture and the main theater for plays, movies and zarzuelas until the construction of the Cultural center of the Philippines in the 1960s, is now a hotel, the only one in Metro Manila with direct access to the rapid transit system, and it hosts a small casino catering to Filipino-Chinese. Most Manila casino customers are ordinary people such as OFWs, office workers, businessmen and even laborers. They come from Makati City, Quezon City, Caloocan City and other areas in Metro Manila. Others are from nearby provinces in Calabarzon, where there are six casinos. In Cavite alone, there are four casinos—one each in Tagaytay, Carmona, Bacoor and Kawit.

In recent years, the scale of the casinos has been greatly enhanced with the opening of several mega-facilities (Antonio 2013, Lacsamana 2015). "Resorts World Manila", a joint venture between *Alliance Global Group* and the Hong Kong-based *Genting Group*, was opened in 2009 opposite Terminal 3 of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

PAGCOR, through an 2009 executive order of president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, encouraged the development of Entertainment City (Red 2012), an ambitious real estate development adjacent to SM Mall of Asia (Pasay) that should put not only the city of Parañaque but the entire Metro Manila on the world map of leisure and entertainment (Sutton 2015). The project was officially named as the "Bagong Nayong Pilipino-Entertainment City". The 120-ha casino cluster reclaimed from Manila Bay in Parañaque aims at becoming another Cotai (the area in Macau built between Coloane and Taipo islands). PAGCOR has awarded casino franchises to four major operators.

In 2013, a first casino-hotel complex, "Solaire Resort and Casino" (De Leon 2013; Cohen 2014a), opened its doors on a site overlooking Manila Bay. Owned by one of the country's richest men, port magnate Enrique Razon (*International Container Terminals, Bloomberry Resorts*), it expected to earn two-thirds of revenues at its 500-room casino resort from local players in its first year of operation, shifting progressively to an even balance between foreign (Chinese) and domestic gamblers after a year or two. It has hired many Filipino employees from casinos in Macau (Batino and Aquino 2012).

It was followed in 2015 by "City of Dreams Manila" (Ganglani 2015; Guinto 2015; Moss and O'Keeffe 2015). A joint venture between the country's richest man

Henry Sy (SM Malls, Belle Corp) in partnership with Australian billionaire James Packer and Lawrence Ho, son of Macau casino mogul Stanley Ho (*Melco Crown Entertainment Ltd.*), the new casino resort complex (three hotels: Hyatt, Nobu, Crown Towers, as well as many shops and restaurants) is an imposing structure on Manila Bay with six gleaming golden towers surrounding a giant egg-shaped dome.

The “Manila Bay Resorts” (Loyola 2014; Felisse-Mangunay 2014; Johnson 2015) of Japanese businessman Kazuo Okada in partnership with Philippine businessman Antonio Cojuangco, a nephew of Corazon Aquino and cousin of Benigno Aquino III, has been undergoing construction and is scheduled to open before the end of 2016. It will be the largest of all four developments, with more than 2000 hotel rooms, 500 gaming tables and 3000 slot machines on the 44 ha site, aimed to welcome a 75% foreign clientele. Resorts World Bayshore City (Dumlao 2014; Mercurio 2014), to be completed in 2018, is developed by *Travellers International*, a joint venture between property tycoon Andrew Tan’s (*Megaworld*) listed investment holding firm *Alliance Global Group Inc. (AGI)* and *Genting Hong Kong Ltd.* The first phase of the complex will include three hotels with a combined portfolio of over 800 rooms, a 3000-seater grand opera house, a shopping mall, residential towers and a gaming area larger than their existing facility in Newport City.

*Caesars Entertainment Corporation (CZR)*, the largest American casino operator known for its Caesars Palace property is planning an integrated casino-entertainment center next to Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 2 (NAIA 2) on a 30-ha largely idle government-owned site. However, PAGCOR is not keen on this development, which is pushed by the Department of Tourism.

Outside Manila, Sino-American Gaming Investment Group, controlled by Denver-based consultant RiskWise Group and Macau Resources Group have proposed two large scale resorts (De La Peña 2015; Jones 2015; Kingsley 2015), one in Lapu-Lapu City near Cebu’s Mactan airport, in addition to the existing Waterfront Airport Hotel and Casino, the other in Napayawan, Masbate, near a proposed airport.

#### **21.4.4 Medical and Wellness Tourism**

The medical tourism<sup>12</sup> industry is in a period of rapid global expansion, with countries like Cuba, Costa Rica, Hungary, India, Israel, Jordan, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, Singapore, South Africa and Thailand actively promoting it. ‘Medical tourists’ include patients trying to avoid treatment delays and obtain timely access to health care. It includes uninsured Americans and other individuals unable to afford health care in their home settings (Ramirez de Arellano 2007; Turner 2010). With

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<sup>12</sup>The World Tourism Organization defines Medical tourism as “Tourism associated with travel to health spas or resort destinations where the primary purpose is to improve the traveler’s physical well being through a regimen of physical exercise and therapy, dietary control, and medical services relevant to health maintenance.”

rising medical and insurance costs, an ailing Medicare program (Jenner 2008), and a universal healthcare plan in doubt, a growing number of middle-class aging American baby boomers travel abroad for the specific purpose of obtaining health care, including elective surgery and long-term care (Esnard 2005). Just as automobile manufacturing and textile production moved outside the United States, American patients are “offshoring” themselves to facilities that use low labor costs to gain competitive advantage in the marketplace.

Destination nations regard medical tourism as a resource for economic development. Hip and knee replacements, ophthalmologic procedures, cosmetic surgery, cardiac care, organ transplants, and stem cell injections can be purchased in the global health services marketplace, as medical tourism enterprises market “sun and surgery” packages and arrange care at international hospitals in destination countries looking at medical tourism as a resource for economic development.

The Philippines could also become a favored destination for patients seeking quality medical care at very affordable cost, “first world health care at third world prices” (Turner 2007). For example, if the average surgeon’s fee for eyelid surgery in the U.S. is \$2500, in the Philippines, a qualified surgeon will charge only \$600 to \$1500. For liposuction, surgeon’s fees in the U.S. average \$2000. In the Philippines, it is around \$800. The Philippine government and healthcare providers hope to capitalize on the country’s reputation of affordable prices, high levels of English fluency, an abundance of well-trained doctors and nurses, and the famous Filipino hospitality. Many believe medical tourism is a natural complement to the Philippines’ burgeoning tourism and service industries. In the Philippines, there are many qualified, English-speaking, doctors who had formal training in plastic and reconstructive surgery and acquired their postgraduate or fellowship training from well-known institutions in the U.S. At the same time, patients can enjoy recreational activities in resorts close to the clinics (Connell 2006).

Marketing strategies of the Philippines as a medical tourism destination include government to government bilateral agreements focusing on medical health exchange, hospital to hospital partnership with foreign hospitals to send their surplus patients to the Philippines, referral and/or co-management in close cooperation with foreign medical referral companies and overseas doctors, and promoting the Philippines as a medical tourism destination to existing foreign tourism markets. Identified competitors are India, Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia, while the target markets are Overseas and former Filipinos (North America), Australians and Pacific islanders (Guam, Nauru, Palau, Micronesia, Papua New Guinea), Japanese, Korean and Middle Eastern (UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia) patients.

The Philippine Medical Tourism Program was established in 2004. The public-private initiative includes government medical centers, private hospitals, various clinics, and the Philippine Departments of Trade and Industry, Tourism and Health. Its objectives are to position the Philippines as a competitive health vacation destination in Asia (Federico 2006), to broaden the marketability of the Philippines as a destination by way of diversifying its tourism products and increase awareness of Philippine medical tourism in target markets through aggressive marketing and promotion programs.

Government agencies promote the sale of transplant packages to international patients, touting for example in Saudi Arabia the low price of kidney transplants (Albuero 2007) at Philippine hospitals such as the Asian Hospital, National Kidney and Transplant Institute, Capitol Medical Center, St. Luke's Medical Center, Philippines Medical Center and others. Several authors have raised the issue of organ trafficking, illegal in Philippines, but the World Health Organization has identified Colombia, India, Pakistan and the Philippines as the leading global hot spots for buying and selling human organs (Turner 2008a, b; Padilla 2009; Mendoza 2010; Yea 2010; De Castro 2013; Gatarin 2014; Boongaling 2015).

Health tourism in the Philippines, "islands of wellness" (Panchal 2010), includes a wide range of body pampering, health and beauty treatments, integrating and promoting traditional Filipino healing modalities and use of local herbs, oils and essences. The Filipino spa experience (Panchal 2014) includes the "traditional Filipino touch therapy" of *hilot*<sup>13</sup> (Alave 2008) (an ancient art of treatment using bare hands and herbs) and *dagdagay* (an indigenous tribal foot massage using bamboo sticks, from the Mountain Province of Northern Luzon) (Carmona Carmona 2012), using an abundance of natural resources: thermal springs, organic and natural products, herbs, warm banana leaves, oils (virgin coconut oil) and essences.<sup>14</sup>

The strengths of the Philippines are its receptiveness to foreigners, English language skills, better sanitation than some competitors (e.g., India), very low cost medical services, strong nursing resources, general and specialty hospitals with a good reputation in Manila, as well as abundant herbal medicine and alternate therapy practitioners. A new emerging trend may be the development of "nursing care tourism" in the Philippines. Instead of sending health care workers abroad, elderly sick retirees may be tempted to come live their late years in the Philippines (Daubenbuechel 2014b).

However, the country is still not able to attract a significant number of medical tourists (Tugade 2014; Dagooc 2015) due to its lack of focus on a specific medical treatment on which to concentrate. Whilst Thailand may be known for cosmetic surgery and Germany for stem cell treatment, the Philippines still has not identified a particular health and wellness treatment which it would provide better than others. The Asian Eye Institute offers LASIK and cataract treatments for foreign patients. [Rxpino.com](http://Rxpino.com), the country's first online health directory, offers packages that include

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<sup>13</sup>The term "Hilot" or "Albolaryo" also refers to a traditional healer. These tagalog words have equivalents in other Philippine tongues : "Aplos" in Bontoc region, "Unar" in the Kalinga, Apayao region, "Aptus" in the Ibatan region, "Ilot" or "Ilut" in the Ibanag, Isneg, Ilocano, Itawis, Zambales and Pampanga regions. "Ablon" in the Northern Ilocano region, "Kemkem" in Pangasinan, "Elot" in the Ilonggo region, "Agud" or "Agod" in the Mindanao and Maranao areas, and "Hagod" in the Bukidnon region of central Mindanao.

<sup>14</sup>Aside from hilot, seven other massage therapies were included: "dinalisay" (decoctions of a mixture of indigenous medicinal herbs), "kisig" galing (biomagnetic energy healing), "unang lana" (virgin coconut oil), "tapik kawayan" (tapping of thin bamboo sticks to affected parts for circulation and releasing of energy blocks), "paligo" (that rinsing bath filled with leaves and flowers believed to have healing properties), "oslob" (steam inhalation from infusions of air-dried aromatic medicinal herbs) and "dagdagay" (traditional foot massage) (Corporal 2005).

tours and other vacation itineraries. Treatments focus on bariatric surgery for the treatment of obesity, cosmetic surgery, eye procedures dental implants and cosmetics. It has tie-ups with various hotels and resorts, spas, tour operators and other related businesses. For each procedure, Rxpinoyn has partnerships with specific clinics and specialists.

Even if hospitals are upgrading their facilities and obtaining international accreditation, their efforts still fail to attract foreigners to prefer the country as a health and wellness destination. Medical tourism can only become a viable growth strategy in the Philippines if a progressive health system, developed physical infrastructure and stable political environment are present, as well as a better overall tourism environment, as indicated earlier (transportation, crime). One of the main impediments to a successful medical tourism program is that the medical facilities are mostly located in Metro Manila and not near the preferred vacation spots in the Visayas (Daubenbuechel 2014a). Skeptics fear that the Philippines, as other developing countries, may emphasize technology-intensive tertiary care for foreigners at the expense of basic health care for their citizens, and that it can exacerbate the brain drain from the public to the private sector, even if possibly it will reverse the outflow of qualified professionals to foreign shores.

## 21.5 Threats and Failures

Despite efforts to improve the status of the country as a host destination, there are some powerful forces threatening the development of tourism in the Philippines.

The first one is overcrowding experienced in a few spots, especially the most famous beach resort area of Boracay (Occeñola 2015). First “discovered” in the 1980s by “hippy” types (Smith 1990), it has become the prime vacation spot in the Philippines, due to its exceptional white sand beaches. In 2014, Boracay received 1,472,352 tourists. One third of the total number of foreigners visiting the Philippines go to Boracay (Lago and Medina 2012), with Korean nationals topping the list. Barely 1032 ha in size, Boracay is reaching its saturation point (Villar 2015) with problems such as green algal blooms regularly coating the island’s waters, serious pollution of the groundwater table due to indiscriminate dumping of sewage and refuse by residents and visitors directly into the waters, resulting in excessive concentrations of fecal matter and coliform bacteria, unplanned resort construction (Burgos 2013; Arnaldo 2016) (331 alongside the island’s coastline), beach erosion, damage to coral reefs (Gonzales 2015), inadequate waste disposal, the rise of crime (begging, theft, robberies, prostitution, drug abuse, drunkenness) (Umil 2015), and excessive noise from nightclubs (Velasco 2015). Residents and tourists are very concerned with the unregulated self-degradation of the island (Romualdez 2012) due to a lack of implementation and enforcement of existing development control guidelines (Trousdale 1998, 1999, Pulta 2011). The challenge facing the island off the coast of Aklan is to develop and implement a long-term comprehensive plan (Flores 2008) to manage infrastructures, environmental protection and tourism

value (quality of the vacation experience) and keep tourism in Boracay sustainable (Ong et al. 2011) and enjoyable (Smith and Eadington 1992; Carter 2004; Smith et al. 2011). Tourism impact assessments are needed in other parts of the Philippines (Quicoy and Briones 2009) to avoid a repetition of the tourism-induced degradation, which is also happening in the Puerto Galera area of Mindoro (Evora 2013).

Rising sea levels will affect coastal tourism in the Philippines as it will in other countries, and maybe even more in the coral reef areas (Karpov Buss 2013). Climate experts forecast that due to global warming, the country will likely experience more severe natural catastrophes, like flooding and storm surges similar to the one brought by supertyphoon Haiyan/Yolanda in 2013, as the Pacific Ocean warms up. This warning brings additional instability and vulnerability to the industry. Media footage at the time showed stranded tourists anxiously waiting to go home in an atmosphere of chaos. These images resulted in mass cancellations of tourist bookings immediately after the typhoon hit. Tourists don't want to visit places of poverty and misery, where infrastructures are damaged or not working. Even in areas not strongly affected by Haiyan, such as Boracay, Cebu and Palawan, resorts and tour operators reported cancellation rates reportedly as high of 30–40%, while Bohol suffered from the damages of an earthquake that happened 2 weeks before the typhoon.

The continued instability and the recurrent kidnappings of foreigners (Chin 2015; Manlupig 2015) remain powerful deterrents to tourism in parts of the country (Varua and Saverimuttu 2012). The threat is highest in the southern Philippines, including coastal and island tourist resorts and dive sites in remote locations in the Sulu Sea and along the Zamboanga Peninsula. Groups based in the south are capable of carrying out kidnappings and launching attacks in other parts of the Philippines surrounding the Sulu Sea such as Palawan, and other locations frequented by tourists. In this part of the Philippines, the conditions that foster such crimes are a volatile mix of poverty, weak law enforcement and easy access to thousands of unlicensed firearms. The consumption landscapes (Ness 2005) of vacation resorts patronized by rich foreigners may be perceived by some as a provocation. Tourism destinations and tourists have always been 'soft targets' for terrorist activities (Paraskevas and Arendell 2007), and the growing trend of anti-tourists terrorism by Islamic extremists may not bypass the Philippines, as the 2002 and 2005 Bali bombings have shown in neighboring Indonesia. Western countries—the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, France and Canada—have issued travel advisories to their nationals in the Philippines (Manalo 2015).

The Philippines, therefore, has to answer fundamental questions as to which way its tourism industry should go, what kind of tourism it really needs, and who the target markets are (Palatino 2015). It should not be destructive to the environment and the local communities as mining has been, and should not forget Filipinos in the drive to attract more foreign visitors. Instead of going into mass markets like other countries in Southeast Asia, the Philippines may have a better approach by specializing in alternative, small-scale, but high-quality tourism, and catering to the Filipino diaspora, which not only regularly sends money to keep the country's economy floating, but also goes home regularly for family visits. The Philippine tourism industry could propose holiday packages suited to their needs and entice them to

spend part of their vacation not away from the homes of their families and friends, but with these family members and friends.

In an archipelago of islands and local cultures like the Philippines, a regional approach giving more power to provinces and local government units to develop tourism may also be welcome as a way to provide regional development and jobs (Javier and Elazigue 2011), and to slow down the excessive growth of Manila. Heritage tourism can be promoted at the local level with minimal funding and with the participation of residents, for example through community museums (Ronquillo 1992).

## 21.6 Local Impacts of Tourism in the Philippines

Tourism and leisure activities have increased opportunities for many Filipinos. Jobs may be more abundant as tourism develops (Yu 2012; Santamaria 2015), hence the growing attractiveness of courses in tourism management in different schools and universities (Solis 2013), such as the Asian Institute of Tourism at University of the Philippines-Diliman (Quezon City), the Lyceum of the Philippines University, in its three campuses of Intramuros (Manila), Cavite and Batangas (Laguador et al. 2014; Ylagan et al. 2014), De la Salle University, University of Santo Tomas, Colegio San Juan de Letran, St Paul University, University of the East and La Consolacion College in Manila, training future employees of tourism companies, cruise lines, . . . With the assistance of the Canadian Tourism and Hospitality Institute, international-level programs are also offered in major tourist spots such as Cebu, Baguio, Bohol or Boracay.

Tourism may become the main fuel of local economic development, even in the varied contexts of the Philippine archipelago (Maguidad 2013), with the well-known risk of excessive dependency towards tourism (Santos and Tomeldan 2009). Provincial governments promote their tourism resources (Velez 2015), using the main ingredients of islandness (Concepcion 2015; Guerrero 2015), protected landscapes (Vista and Rosenberger 2015), waterfalls, beaches, surfing,<sup>15</sup> snorkeling, rice terraces, heritage (Asi et al. 2015; Valderama 2014) and warm hospitality, while touting the virtues of being located off-the-beaten-path (Madarang 2015). Sustainable tourism (Alampay 2005; Cortez 2016), agrotourism (Sarian 2012; Cacho 2014; Latoza 2014; Ramos-Aquino 2014; Tuzon et al. 2014; Viray 2014; Luci 2015) and ecotourism (Sinha 2012; Reyes 2015; Mayuga 2016) are strongly emphasized by local government units (Bansil et al. 2015; Gumanao et al. 2015), the national tourism board and tourism experts (Alcid 2010; Keith 2013; Berino 2014; Zozobrado 2015) as a way for the Philippines to enhance job opportunities in the provinces and offer quality tourism to foreign visitors and Filipino citizens alike. The archipelagic nature of the country is an asset to tap, for example in the develop-

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<sup>15</sup>The best known surfing spots are in Baler (Aurora), Bagasbas Beach (Camarines Norte), San Juan (La Union) and Siargao (Surigao del Norte).

ment of marine tourism and cruises (Oiga 2014a; Remo 2015; Chua 2016), as well as the boat manufacturing industries, and the diversification of the economic base of fishing communities (Porter 2014). The country can learn from the lessons of other archipelagoes that have embraced tourism, such as the Balearics of Spain or the Hawaiian islands (Bardolet and Sheldon 2008). The rich natural marine environment of the country (White and Rosales 2003) is a definite asset, as long as local people get involved (Austin and Eder 2007; Jalani 2012) and tourism does not create problems with the resources, for example in situations when tourists can be in close contact with rare animals (Quiros 2005, 2007), a form of ecotourism which needs to be strictly regulated.

We will spotlight four areas of the country with diverse facets of tourism: Bohol, Laguna, Batanes and the Banaue/Ifugao rice terraces area.

### ***21.6.1 Bohol: A Focus on Ecotourism***

Bohol has played the card of ecotourism to lift its population out of poverty (Acejo et al. 2004; Porter and Orams 2014). A number of resorts have been built in recent years on the island itself and nearby Panglao island (Bersales 1999), catering mostly to upper-class customers (Andolong 2015). However, this may have some negative effects. If the preservation of geomorphologic oddities such as the cone karst area known as “Chocolate Hills” (Urich et al. 2001) have been hailed, the establishment of a protected area in response to deforestation, agricultural exploitation and uncontrolled quarrying has imposed a Westernized model of land tenure. Controversies arose about the burning practices used to maintain the grass-covered (tree-less) and brown hills to sustain tourist arrivals instead of letting trees grow in the wet tropical weather (Bantayan et al. 2013). The imposition of protective legislation to stop degradation of a landscape deemed interesting has disenfranchised and marginalized many local farmers and residents, leading to conflicting views on environmental protection and the property rights of landowners and farmers,<sup>16</sup> with the risk of escalation in civil unrest and armed conflict (Urich 2003) with a growing influence of the NPA. In a context of increasing land pressure, farmers were allowed in 2002 to cultivate some flatlands near the hills (Villanueva 2002). A congressman has even proposed to develop cocoa plantations around the geological site (Valencia 2012). However, the hypothesis of mass tourism to the top island sites cannot be envisioned serenely (Evidente 2009). Threatened coral and mangrove sites (Samonte-Tan et al. 2007; Husana and Kikuchi 2013; Bullecer et al. 2014) and animals like the tarsier (Cañete 2003; Aure and Escabi-Ruiz 2005) or flying foxes (Balane 2014) cannot sustain mass tourism. The province has endeavored to empower local residents (Pleno 2006) in the efforts to preserve tourism resources and instill some pride in being a Boholano. Examples include the replanting of mangroves (Amper 2004)

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<sup>16</sup> Similar conflicts between farming activities and the development of scenic areas for tourism have occurred in other parts of the country, such as Nasugbu (Batnagas) (Dizon 2015).



and the preservation of historical heritage (Camongol 2015; Jimenez-David 2015), such as the houses built by the Chinese in Sitio Ubos, the “pariancito” (little Chinatown) of Tagbilaran. Another limiting factor for mass tourism in Bohol and other tourism areas in the Philippines is the weakness of infrastructures. The Port Terminal in Tagbilaran (Avila 2013) can hardly handle the growing number of tourists that come for a visit, and the 2013 earthquake that hit the island did not make things better.

### 21.6.2 *Laguna’s Resorts: Perimetropolitan Leisure*

The Province of Laguna, south of Manila, has been dubbed the “Detroit of the Philippines” because of Sta. Rosa’s major vehicle manufacturers and the “Silicon Valley of the Philippines” due to the presence of a number of electronic and semiconductor companies operating in the Province. It is also known as the “Resort Capital of the Philippines”: about 500 hot spring resorts and pools utilize hot natural water from the foot of Mt. Makiling, an dormant volcano rising to about 1109 m above sea level in the municipalities of Calamba and the aptly named Los Baños,<sup>17</sup> and also on the southern reaches of Mt Banahaw (Fig. 21.8).

Swimming, bathing and balneology are the direct beneficiaries of geothermal energy in Laguna. The waters are promoted for skin troubles, relaxation, therapy and recreation. Due to its proximity to the Manila metropolitan area, the province is the top one in the country for the number of tourist stays in commercial facilities.<sup>18</sup> Even if geothermal resources are usually known as renewable energies, studies have shown that the intense use of underground thermal waters in Laguna province resorts has an effect: the swimming pools are drained/changed on an average of two to three times a week or even daily during peak periods of tourist arrivals. The unrestrained exploitation of groundwater has resulted in the drying up of older wells and the decrease in hot spring water temperature (Jago-On et al. 2014).

The hot spring resorts in Laguna are open 24 h a day. During the hot “summer” months of March to May, these resorts are fully booked and occupied daily. However, as summer months pass, local tourists come only on weekends. Most customers are Filipinos, but some resorts cater also to foreign tourists, especially Koreans, such as the 88 Hot Spring Resort in Calamba, 100% owned and designed by a Korean national and manned by Korean-Filipino managers.

Perimetropolitan leisure activities in Laguna also include a Disney-like theme park, “Enchanted Kingdom” in Santa Rosa, as well as the Pagsanjan River waterfalls reached by “bancas” (dugout canoes) shooting up rapids to reach them. “Bangkero” boatmen running (litterally, when they negotiate boulders in the rapids)

<sup>17</sup>The pre-Spanish name of the city was Mainit, which means “hot” in tagalog.

<sup>18</sup>According to 2011 data from the Philippine Department of Tourism, 2,9 million visitors stayed overnight in Laguna, more than in Greater Manila (2,8 M), Camarines Sur (2,5M), Cebu (1,9M), Cavite (1,8M), Zambales (1,1M) or Boracay (900.000), Davao (744.000) or Baguio (552.000).

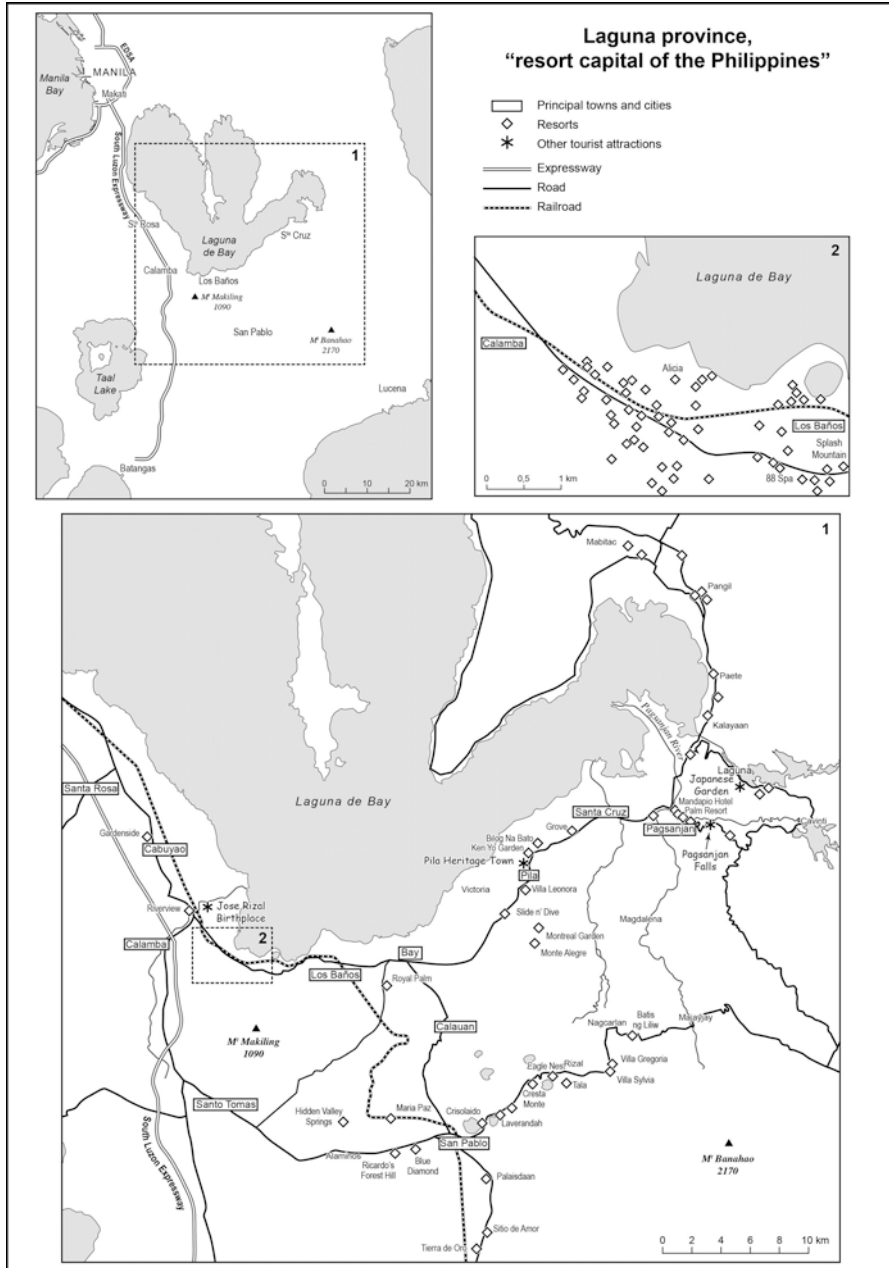


Fig. 21.8 Perimetropolitan tourism in Laguna province

the bancas are required to undergo a rigid 6-month training in order to acquire a license/accreditation for guiding tourists on the ride to the falls. This boat ride, very popular with Korean visitors today, already existed in the late nineteenth century

### 21.6.3 *Batanes*

Only 190 km south of Taiwan, Batanes (Hornedo 2000; Veld 2014), the northernmost group of islands in the archipelago, was created following a series of volcanic activities when Mount Iraya—today a dormant volcano that stands 1517 m above sea level—erupted around 325 BC. Batanes, the only province that is also a protected area, is the smallest province in the Philippines, in size and population. It is composed of three inhabited islands, Batan (which contains the capital town of Basco), Sabtang and Itbayat, and seven islets. Mt. Iraya's erupted again in 400 AD, coughing out many andesite boulders into the surrounding beaches. The coastline is quite different from the rest of the Philippines, and constantly hit by raging waves discouraging the hardest swimmers. The landscape of Batanes is quite distinct from other Philippine provinces due to the steep cliffs, rolling hills, deep canyons and boulder-lined shores. The wind-swept hills of the mini-archipelago, unfit for most tropical agriculture (no rice, bananas or coconut trees...), are the domain of livestock, with cattle, carabaos and goats raised on meadowlands separated by stone walls or hedges, a bocage-type landscape leading visitors to compare it with Ireland or Scotland. Compared to the rest of the country, the Batanes' weather is rather pleasant—it has an almost temperate climate from December to February, and it enjoys practically four seasons, the best one being summer which is from March to early June.

The province is home to the Ivatan, nationally acclaimed as “True Insulares”: they trace their roots to early Austronesian immigrants (Anderson 2005) from Taiwan as well as Spaniards who came to the island in the sixteenth century. They are fishermen (Mangahas 2010) if the weather lets them venture onto the sea and have specific building traditions. Unlike in the rest of the country where *nipa* huts are a common sight, the houses in Batanes are made of stone to withstand the destructive force of typhoons that so often strike the islands (Uy and Shaw 2008). House walls are at least a meter thick and thatched roofs are designed to last up to three decades of the constant battering of typhoons. Furthermore, these houses have a layer of solid wood window shutters, and their roofs have no eaves so the wind cannot enter the house and blow away the roof. One of the most interesting structures in Batan is Tukon Church, also known as Mt Carmel Chapel, a small chapel built the traditional way. Boulders make up the church's walls, interrupted only by carved wooden doors and stained glass windows. Inside, hand-painted images of the province's patron saints, one for each municipality, wrap its ceiling. Like Tagalog, The Ivatan language is peppered with pidgin Spanish words, but the isolation from mainland Luzon has resulted in a unique culture and distinct traditions having little in common with the rest of the country. It is clearly the least Filipino-looking part of the Philippines.

Due to the strength of its natural and cultural assets (Boncan-Buensalido 2015), Batanes is a high value destination that needs proper management for tourism to thrive. Tourism may be a way to stem the emigration of youth from Batanes to Luzon by creating more job opportunities. However, being an archipelago of a few small islands, it is quite vulnerable to the negative impacts of uncontrolled tourism.<sup>19</sup> Ecotourism enterprise development has been introduced as a strategy to provide an economic incentive for the villagers to maintain and repair their Ivatan houses and protect their natural resources.

#### ***21.6.4 The Rice Terraces of Northern Luzon and the Sagada Caves***

For many Filipinos, the rice terraces of the Cordillera Central are the eighth wonder of the world. Through the labor deployed there by the Ifugao people, these high altitude rice fields hugging the curves of the mountains create a landscape of great beauty that expresses the preserved harmony between man and the environment. They also reflect sacred traditions. The sites of Banaue, Batad and Bangaan are most remarkable and have been registered by UNESCO as World Heritage sites in 1995, as have the cultural landscapes of Bali Island in Indonesia (2012). The tourism image of the Banaue area is built around the 4 H (habitat, heritage, history, handicrafts) of the tourism industry (Medrana 2013). The Bali rice fields are quite easy to reach, but access to the Ifugao terraces is difficult, through a long, high altitude, winding road from Baguio, almost impossible to negotiate with buses. Jeepneys, minivans, private cars and motorcycles are the only practical ways to visit the terraces area.

As in Bali, the main challenge to tourism is to preserve the landscapes and the traditions (Bulilan 2007; Dulnuan 2014) in a difficult social and economic environment. The exceptional value of the Ifugao rice terraces (Sun et al. 2011) has led to efforts of preservation that have altered the perception of the local people on their heritage value. The Ifugao hierarchy of heritage values has not been fully understood by decision makers, while the local people tend to resent the restrictions imposed by outsiders on their lifestyle and perceived needs. The terraces epitomize the modern tensions putting a strain worldwide on that “harmony” between human-kind, culture and nature. According to UNESCO, “the terraced landscape is highly vulnerable because the social equilibrium that existed in the rice terraces for the past two millennia has become profoundly threatened by technological and evolutionary changes.”

However, after the rice terraces were put on the UNESCO endangered list in 2001, a new conservation approach giving more weight to local wisdom and cooperation between the Ifugao and other actors has been implemented (Guimbatan and

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<sup>19</sup>The mayor of Sabtang Island, obviously aware of the logistical and environment problems faced by Boracay, wants to contain the number of visitors in the island.

Baguilat 2006), allowing UNESCO to remove them from the endangered list in 2012. Some of the key challenges and threats (Nozawa et al. 2008) are the rural exodus of young people seeking better livelihoods and non-agricultural jobs (Dizon et al. 2012) in cities (no people, no terraces) and even abroad like many Filipinos (McKay 2003), the changes in food habits (no rice, no terraces), deforestation and the introduction of exotic tree species, the declining place of traditional rituals. The standardization of education excludes learning the Ifugao culture and the local knowledge that allows the survival of rice terraces. Finally, the introduction of non-endemic species of rice for more intensive farming weakens a sensitive ecosystem.

There are also challenges from tourism itself. Tourism contributes to the local economy, but also has negative impacts (SITMo 2008), among them the degradation of many attractive rural settlements where terraces are found. The Ifugao are victims of the commercialization of their culture: local people pose for pictures in their traditional dress and their traditional dances are modified specifically to please tourists, leading to distortions, some even say prostitution, of Ifugao culture. Tourism revenues are not well distributed and mainly accrue to hotels, restaurants and tour operators, and not to Ifugao farmers. An ineffective management of tourism flows has led to adverse environmental and land use impacts: hotels and inns have mushroomed in Banaue, with no standards for location and design; modern structures do not blend with the landscape of terraces; traditional homes are disappearing, while some new homes have been built on former terraces. There is, like elsewhere in the Philippines, more garbage.

World heritage site management has added new challenges (Akagawa and Siririsak 2008): how to reconcile the need for the evolution of the living traditions among local people, and the local/national/international requirements and regulations (Licyayo 2013) to conserve the outstanding universal values of the area, including intangible heritage? The identity of Ifugao and other Igorot groups itself has been questioned by scholars, as has been the age of the terraces themselves. It may very well be a recent colonial construct (McKay 2005).

The benefits of tourism have not trickled down to the terrace farmers themselves, who stress that tourism should not be the main reason for preserving the terraces. In cultural landscapes (Phillips 1998; Taylor and Lennon 2010), should nature and landscape be at the top of the conservation agenda, or should it rather be the local culture?

To save the terraces, local Ifugao groups have been quite active in developing new approaches to heritage preservation, involving much more the farmers, and empowering them to take charge of their own landscape (Martin 2015). SITMo (Save the Ifugao Terraces Movement) is the main group, whose mission is to revive traditional Ifugao knowledge and share it with the new generation. They fight the standardization of education by creating indigenous educational materials. They also set up community and economic development activities to improve the lives of Ifugao (rural electrification projects, agricultural properties project management). They also promote community ecotourism involving the local Ifugao community: farmers are trained in order to become guides and open guesthouses for visitors. The

main challenge is to make them understand the expectations and needs of different tourists (Filipino, Chinese, Korean, Western), for example in the provision of hot showers. A program developed in cooperation with the University of the Philippines Diliman (Macapagal and Bermejo 2015; Macapagal et al. 2015) seeks to rehabilitate traditional Ifugao housing and turn it into lodges for visitors wanting to be immersed in local culture. Other programs include institutional and private stakeholders (Ananayo 2015), including corporations such as SM (shopping malls) (See 2012), Toshiba Electronics or Canon Philippines, willing to sponsor the physical rehabilitation of the rice terraces as well as encouraging the continuation of rice cultivation,<sup>20</sup> especially the indigenous tinawon rice. The Department of Tourism (DOT) and the local government have launched community-based tourism projects by promoting “trekking tour packages” around the Hapao Rice Terraces (Comanda 2015).

SITMo’ global vision of cultural, environmental and solutions provided by intergenerational exchange of knowledge and community-based ecotourism is an idealistic model for the sustainable development of a threatened indigenous people. However, what if the exodus continues and Ifugao culture is lost? What if too many tourists come to Banaue? Will local communities be ready? Will the Ifugao abandon rice farming to focus more on tourism, at the risk of their fragile ecosystem?

Most visitors to the rice terraces will also tour the little city of Sagada and its surroundings. Sagada (Scott 1988; Comila 2007) is a town nestled among the pine forests, and although it also boasts picturesque mountain scenery and rice terraces, it is best known for the hanging coffins<sup>21</sup> on the flanks of the limestone cliffs and in the grottoes (Sumaguing, Lumiang, Sugong) of The “Valley of Echoes”. The tourism industry has packaged Banaue and Sagada by way of the myth of the Cordillera region as a place where rice terraces abound, so that a tight association between place and tourist attraction is formed and continuously reinforced by postcards (Torres 2006).

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<sup>20</sup>Farm tools and other equipment were turned over by the SM Prime Holdings team to the local government of Ifugao province, while Toshiba Electronics adopted portions of the Batad rice terraces and donated funds and farming equipment to improve yields of “tinawon” and sustain native rice production as the major source of income of tribal communities.

<sup>21</sup>This is a unique funerary custom of the Isagada/Kankanaey people, one of the Igorot mountain tribes, in which the dead are buried in coffins which are tied or nailed to the side of cliffs. This type of burial is reserved for the most distinguished or honorable leaders in the community, particularly the most prominent figure in the *dap-ay* (a dwelling build especially for unmarried boys). During their lifetime, such personages would have performed meritorious acts, decided wisely on matters at hand, and took charge of indigenous rituals. The coffins are carved by the elderly before they die. If they are too weak or ill to do so, a son or a relative would do it for them. The hanging coffins of Sagada may seem awkwardly placed, but the practice protects the dead from floods and animals, and for ancient Igorots, this tradition allowed their loved ones to get closer to heaven. Similar practices have now been abandoned in Indonesia and China.

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