
Changing Lives through Relocation

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Ethnography of a Socialized Housing Project in the Philippines

DISSERTATION

Zur Erlangung des Akademischen Grades eines Doktors der Philosophie

am Fachbereich 2: Philologie / Kulturwissenschaften der

UNIVERSITÄT Koblenz-Landau

vorgelegt im Promotionsfach Kulturwissenschaft

(Schwerpunkt Ethnologie)

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**To Jonna, Maite
and Thomas**

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GLOSSARY

Awardee – Term used by the NGO for those selected members who undergo the Ritual of Transfer and are awarded a house in the housing project.

Beneficiary – Term used by the NGO for members from partner communities in squatter areas and dumpsite settlements who participate in the application and selection process for the housing project.

Comfort Room (CR) – Term used in the Philippines to refer to a public or private toilet, restroom and bathroom. In everyday language, only the abbreviation CR is used.

Dumpsite Settlement – In this book, I use this term for residential areas established by urban poor scavengers on or at the margins of urban dumpsites.

Feeding Place – This is how the residents call the area in the housing project, where Family Group members prepare a warm meal for the children of the housing project for a Peso. The so-called feeding program is part of the NGO's health activities in their partner communities.

Homepartner/s – Term used by the NGO for the residents who are registered as the owners of the house and lot.

Lifeworld – I use this term in its everyday sense and not in its phenomenological sense. That means with this term I refer to what my research partners experience as their taken for granted everyday reality.

Scavenger – This term is used for people who secure their livelihood by collecting, recycling and selling waste and recyclable materials.

Scavenging – This term is used for the search of recyclable materials in waste.

Squatter Area – In this book, I use this term for urban residential areas inhabited by very poor people who have no access to their own land and thus "squat" on empty land, whether private or public.

CEBUANO TERMS¹

Abuhan – A fireplace used for cooking. In English, it is commonly called *dirty kitchen*, presumably because of the dirt produced by the soot when cooking on an open fire.

Alimúut (adj.) – Stuffy, airless.

Ate – Title for elder sister. The title is also given to any woman elder than the speaker.

Arenola – Urinal pan.

Banig – Woven straw sleeping mat.

Baranggay – A unit of government of the pre-Spanish Filipinos. It is also the term for village.

Basuríro – Garbage collector or scavenger.

Dúdung short form **dung** – Term of address for a male of the same age or younger than the speaker. It is also a nickname popular for boys.

Halla! – Expression of surprise or helplessness upon watching sth. happen.

Hayáhay – My research partners used this term to refer to the improved living conditions in the housing project: in terms of comfort, it means that life is now less exhausting as basic everyday practices require less effort (like e.g. body hygiene). In terms of safety, it means that they feel relieved from the burden of their former informal lifestyle.

Húgaw (adj.) – Dirty, unclean.

Inday (short form **day**) – Title or term of address for a female the same age or younger than the speaker, often adopted as the informal first name.

Jeepney(s) – Vehicles, which are converted into minibuses with up to 14 seats. Originally, these were *Willys jeeps* the Americans had left behind after leaving the Philippines.

Kíkik – A bird, which makes the sound *kíkik*. People believe that it accompanies an *úngù* or, in other versions, is a form the *úngù* takes.

Kuryinti – Term for electric current and/or electric wire.

Kurmáta – Large two-wheeled cart with shafts, designed for draft animals but in urban areas pushed by people, used for transporting sth. heavy.

Kuya – Title for an elder brother and title of respect for a man older than the speaker.

¹ For the translations of the Cebuano terms I used Wolff (1972): "A Dictionary of Cebuano Visayan" and placed the different meanings in the context of the living world of my research partners.

Kuyaw – Expression for a fright- and dreadful atmosphere.

Lechon manok – Spit-Roasted Chicken is a favorite Filipino Dish.

Limpyo – Clean, neat, tidy.

Malong – A traditional tube skirt.

Mingaw – Lonely, deserted; lonely in feeling; quiet; miss sb.

Multicap – A type of minibus usually from the brand Suzuki. It is used for (passenger) transportation in the Philippines. They usually run on fixed routes, like the Jeepneys (cf. above), but can also be hired for individual trips with drivers. People also use these vehicles for their small-scale businesses offering transportation services.

Nanay – Mother; and term of address.

Nipa – Palm of great commercial importance growing along tidal streams and in dense stands in brackish swamps. The leaves are used mainly for thatching, but also for bags, hats, and handicrafts. The sap is fermented into toddy and distilled into a stronger liquor called *manyán*. It also is used as vinegar.

Paningkámut – My research partners used this expression when speaking about their efforts to avail a house in the housing project.

Panumpa – Pledge of Occupancy

Rugby – Term for sniffing glue.

Walay samok – No noise. My research partners used this expression to describe the calm and peaceful atmosphere of the housing project, which is a contrasting experience to the atmosphere of squatter and dumpsite settlements. There the atmosphere is characterized by noise, chaos, and disputes especially at night.

Santo Niño – Is the Spanish title for the Christ Child. In the Philippines, the term is still used to refer to the Child Jesus. The figure of Santo Niño is omnipresent on home altars as well as in offices and stores. In Cebu, Santo Niño is worshipped as the patron saint of the islanders. In the event of fire, informal settlers ensure that the figure of Santo Niño is rescued first from the house.

Sari-sari store – Is a category of stores that sell various items in small quantities. Families often run it as a sideline enterprise at home.

Sityu – Sub-Village.

Sugà – Light; term is also used to refer to electricity.

Suz! – Uttered upon discovering that sth. is to a greater extent than expected, or indicating disbelief or the conviction that sth. is feigned.

Tabay – Deep well.

Tanduay – Brand of Philippine Rum.

Tanud – is a (local) guard usually on the *baranggay* level, but also in gated communities or neighborhoods.

Traysikul – Bicycle with sidecar, which is used for (passenger) transportation.

Traysikat – Motorcycle with sidecar used for passenger transportation.

Tubig – Water.

Úngù – Is a person who is possessed of a supernatural force which attacks from time to time, causing him to change his form and go out, often to harm others, preying on their blood, liver, et al. (cf. Wolf 1972). When my research partners spoke about the *úngù*, they told me that it is a monster.

Videoke – Is the Philippine variation of karaoke. It is a popular pastime and an indispensable part of celebrations and social gatherings.

Walay ugma – Expression of my research partners, which refers to the uncertainty of the squatter's life meaning that "You don't know if tomorrow will come".

Walay lingaw – Commonly used expression in the housing project to point out that 'There is nothing to be done'.

ABBREVIATIONS

BEC – Basic Ecclesial Community

BOD – Board of Directors

CHV – Community Health Volunteers

FG – Family Group

HCD – Human and Community Development

MRF – Multi-Recycling-Facility

MIGS – Members in Good Standing

NGO – I use this term on behalf of the name of the Filipino faith-based, non-governmental organization that initiated the social housing project for data protection reasons.

NIGS – Members not in Good Standing

PLACES

Aroma – Name of squatter area in Mandaue City

Asturias – Name of a municipality in the province of Cebu Island

Bankal – Name of a *baranggay* in Lapu-Lapu City (Location of the Socialized Housing Project and Lapu-Lapu City's dumpsite settlement)

Basak Pardo – Name of a *baranggay* in Cebu City

Bohol – Island in the Visayas

Camotes – Island in the Visayas

Ibo - Name of a *baranggay* in Lapu-Lapu City

Inayawan – Name of *baranggay* in Cebu City; location of Cebu City's dumpsite settlement

Mactan Island – Is a small but densely populated Island located only a few kilometers (about 1km) from Cebu Island. The island is connected to Cebu City and Mandaue City by two bridges. The main municipality of the Island is Lapu-Lapu City.

Maharlika – Name of squatter area in Mandaue City

Mahayahay – Name of squatter area in Mandaue City

Metro Cebu – Is the main urban center of the Island of Cebu in the Visayas and comprises thirteen cities and municipalities. These include Cebu City, Mandaue City and Lapu-Lapu City. The residents of the socialized housing project were resettled from *baranggays* of these districts.

Pasil – Name of a *baranggay* in Cebu City

Pusok – Name of a *baranggay* in Lapu-Lapu City

Tipolo – Name of a *baranggay* in Cebu City

Umapad – Name of a *baranggay* in Mandaue City; Location of Mandaue City's dumpsite settlement)

PROLOGUE

It is four o'clock in the morning. I hear the alarm ringing at my neighbors' place reminding me to better get up. Today is a special day for the community. Six new families from different squatter areas and the dumpsite settlement next door are transferring to the housing project. Therefore, at dawn, the residents and NGO employees perform a Ritual of Transfer called 'the Exodus' for the new *homepartners*. It is the sixth batch of *awardees* who today undergo the ritual.

When I leave my house, it is still dark in the community. I barely see the ground I am walking on. Only some houses are already illuminated. I walk up the gravel road passing by the numerous rows of houses towards the chapel trying to find my way around the various potholes without tripping. While walking, the smell of freshly baked bread reaches my nose. It is the first time that I smell fresh bread in the community. The smell comes from the new cooperative bakery, which will be ceremonially inaugurated today and start its business after the Ritual of Transfer. I pass by the just lately finished building for the bakery and the *Herbarium*. The rooms are illuminated, and above the door a handmade paper announces the name and location of the new bakery.

I keep walking towards the worship center, which is only few more meters to go. A bonfire burns under the acacia tree in front of the chapel. A couple of people stand around the fireplace. The smell of fresh bread slowly mixes with the smell of burning wood and steaming coffee from a big pot on the fire.

The president of the Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) and two women are busy preparing the worship center for the Exodus. They place a table with a white tablecloth at the side entrance of the chapel facing the entrance gate of the housing site. While the president checks the sound system, the two women take a hand bell and leave the chapel. Giggling and holding on to each other's shoulders, they walk down the two main roads of the housing site. They ring the bells to inform the people about the upcoming start of the Exodus. One by one, the residents come out of their houses. They gather under the acacia tree to wait for the priest and the NGO employees to arrive, and to start the ritual. Two men are joking and dancing under the acacia tree. Even though it is still early in the morning, the people arriving seem to be in a good mood and to be excited about the event of the day.

The sun has not yet risen. The air feels cool and relatively fresh. It is not yet as heavy as it gets during the day due to the tropical heat in combination with the smoke from fireplaces rising from the many dirty kitchens in the community and the surrounding neighborhoods. Nikita,

living next door, arrives at the acacia tree with another woman from the community. They used to be neighbors. Both wear jackets, although I only wear shorts and a t-shirt. They wonder if I do not feel cold because they feel chilly.

The procession of the Exodus starts outside the housing project at the chapel of San Roque which is in front of the dumpsite settlement. Just shortly before five o'clock, the priest and the NGO employees arrive, and the people gathering around the acacia tree set out their way towards the chapel of San Roque. Nikita and I join the group. It is a five-minute walk passing by the paper manufacturing company situated on the left and a *sari-sari store* and the Material Recycling Facility (MRF) on the right side of the access road. At this time of the day, the access road is not yet busy: there are no garbage trucks lining up in front of the entrance gate of the MRF, and there are no employees coming from or going to work. It is even too early for the *traysikat drivers* who usually line up in front of the *sari-sari store* to wait for potential customers. The only ones busy at this time of the day are the countless roosters in the neighborhood filling the air with their morning crowing.

It is about 5 o'clock, when the group of around 50 people finally arrives the chapel of San Roque and gathers together in a semi-circle in front of the chapel. Besides the *awardees* with their families and the NGO employees, the group is composed mainly of women aged 40 to 50 years - some accompanied by their children. Five women place themselves in front of the group. They wait for the priest to get prepared. When he is ready, they start praying the rosary in Cebuano. They hold the rosary in their hands and go from bead to bead with their fingers while praying. One of the women carries the figurine of Virgin Mary that usually stands in the community chapel. In the meantime, another woman distributes long, thin, white candles to the *awardees* and lights them. It is still quite dark because the sun has not yet risen and the soft yellow flames of the candles cast a warm glow on the people holding them. Now, the air is filled with the melodious praying voices of the women, and the crowing of the roosters fades into the background.

Looking around, I take some pictures of the scenery. The *awardees* and their family members carry different objects with them. There is for example Fay, who I got to know during her sweat-equity work in the weeks before. Today she, her husband and their adopted son transfer to their new house. They carry with them a yellow plastic bag with a folded *banig* (a woven sleeping mat), a pillow and a plastic container filled with rice inside - but this I only found out after the ritual.

Another *awardee* is Tracy with her husband and their two daughters aged 4 and 5 years. For the Ritual of Transfer, they have brought a bucket and empty plastic containers. Tracy and her family have already lived in the housing project for a couple of months together with her mother

and her younger brother. As she is expecting her third child, they applied for an own house. What she, however, does not know at this moment is that she will give birth to her baby boy the next night, their first night in their new house.

After the prayer leaders have finished the first part of the rosary, the group starts its procession towards the housing project. The priest and the woman carrying the Virgin Mary lead the procession, followed by the three prayer leaders and by the *awardees* and their families. In the last couple of weeks, the *awardees* spent around 200 hours in the community to accomplish their sweat-equity work through weeding, cleaning the communal grounds and working on the construction site. The sweat-equity work is a kind of pre-service for the community, through which the *awardees* are to demonstrate their willingness to become an active member of the community. The procession takes its way back to the housing project and stops in front of the open entrance gate. Three women - one of the *awardees*, her daughter and one of the prayer leaders - step in front of the group for a prayer. The *awardee's* daughter holds the bible in front of her mother and the other woman provides light with a candle for the *awardee* to read out verse 3 from the book of Exodus, Chapter 13:

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.

And Moses said unto the people: Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this place.

The priest then steps in front of the group. He welcomes the *awardees* and their families and gives a short speech about today's event – the Exodus. Referring to the biblical Exodus, he compares the transfer of the *awardees* with the story of the Israelites – ‘the chosen people’ – fleeing from the enslavement in Egypt to the Promised Land. After he has finished, the *awardees* take turns in also giving a short speech, in which they share some experiences of their former lives. They express their feeling of joy about having been selected as *homepartners* of the housing project. Fay is the first to speak. In tears and while covering her face with a white hand towel, she expresses her gratitude to different people who helped her since she became a member of the NGO. She names e.g. the German doctors who saved her live when she had a tubal pregnancy a couple of years ago. She also expresses her gratitude to one of the NGO employees who encouraged and supported her to apply for the housing project. When she finishes her speech, still in tears, the people around me start to clap their hands. I feel a desire to go to Fay and hug her but I hold myself back thinking that it might not be adequate. The next who speaks is Tracy. She slowly walks in front of the group with her already big baby belly. She also names a couple of people who made it possible for her family to finally move into their own house in the housing project despite their small income.

While the *awardees* speak, I am standing in the middle of the audience. I feel the intensity of the atmosphere. It is emotionally charged. Some of the women beside me weep silently and dry tears off their eyes. The atmosphere and Fay's and Tracy's words affect me and put me in a reflective mood. I find it hard to imagine what they have already gone through in their lives and what this step to transfer to the housing project really means to them. I continue listening to the next *awardees*. Their speeches are much shorter than the first two. The last speaker is a male *awardee*. He seems to be very nervous, struggling to find the right words. He takes deep breaths between words.

After the speeches, the main part of the ritual starts with the so-called pilgrim dance. It is performed when crossing the threshold to the housing project in the following way: five rows are formed, in which the participants line up behind each other. The right hand is laid on the left shoulder of the person standing in front. Being in touch with each other, the procession starts walking to cross the threshold by taking two steps forward and one step back. I walk in one of the middle positions trying to keep the right step-sequence. The man walking in front of me seems to have some difficulties as well. I hear Nikita giggling behind me. The procession waves its way forward around 20m towards the side entrance of the chapel. Here, the next part of the ritual takes place: the washing of hands and handing over of keys.

The table covered with a white tablecloth that has been placed besides the entrance of the chapel in the morning is now in use. For the washing of hands, a black plastic washing pan filled with water and a towel is put on the right side of the table. Six keys lie on the left side of the washing pan, each with a labeled piece of scotch tape on. By taking a closer look through the lens of my camera, I can read what is written on one of them: 'Fay'.

The priest and the project coordinator of the housing project walk behind the table. The *awardees* and their families line up in front of it. Here, the priest welcomes them again. He shortly explains the symbolic meaning of the washing of hands which also refers to the exodus of the Israelites and as such symbolizing the crossing of the Red Sea. Then the project coordinator takes the first key and calls out the name written on the scotch tape. The called out *awardee* and his/her family step in front of the table. All family members are asked to wash their hands. Before handing over the key, the priest shakes hands with all family members and congratulates them. The project coordinator gives the key to the priest, who hands it over to the new *homepartner*. Fay is the third *awardee* to be called: She, her husband and son go to the table to wash their hands. Her son is just tall enough to look over the table. Therefore, she helps him to wash and dry his hands. She seems to be happy but also a little bit absent as if she cannot yet understand what is happening at that moment.

After receiving the keys, the families walk into the chapel where, in the meantime, the residents of the housing project have formed a line from the entrance up to the altar to welcome the new families. While the atmosphere at the washing table was rather tense, the atmosphere now in the chapel is thrilled and joyful. The people in the church laugh and sing. They raise their arms in the air clapping and hugging each new member of the community after they enter the chapel. In the chapel, the Ritual of Transfer is now being completed with the so-called *Panumpa* – the Pledge of Occupancy. Therefore, the new *homepartners* and their families take seats on the right side of the chapel and the other community members on the left side to bear witness to this last part of the ritual. First, the priest asks everyone in the chapel to stand up. Next, the new *homepartners* and their partners take the Certificate of the *Panumpa* into their left hand and raise their right hand with the open palm facing forward. Then, the new *homepartners* read the *Panumpa* aloud:

Panumpa – Pledge of Occupancy

“I, [name of the awardee], new resident of [name of the socialized housing project] pledge to follow the policies and laws of BEC, the Cooperative and of [name of the NGO] here in the community.

I pledge to be active and to participate in all activities of the BEC and the Cooperative here.

I further promise to help maintain peace and orderliness in the community by respecting my neighbors and implementing good relationship to each and everyone.

I also promise to take care of my house and to maintain its cleanliness including the entire surrounding within [name of the socialized housing project].

I will take precaution to my action to be a role model to the community especially for children and youth.

So help me God.”

After reading out the *Panumpa*, the project coordinator distributes ball pens to the *homepartners* to finally sign the pledge. Fay signs the *Panumpa* as well. I wonder whether she read the *Panumpa* or whether she memorized it beforehand because she barely knows how to read and write. Only later I learned that she did not apply right away for becoming a *homepartner* of the housing project because of her poor reading and writing skills. However, one of the NGO employees encouraged her to apply and also offered to teach her.

When all new home partners have signed the *Panumpa*, the project coordinator collects the certificates for the priest to countersign them in his function as executive director of the NGO.

The ceremony then closes with the ‘Welcome Song’ welcoming the new residents to the community:

“Welcome song”

I

Welcome to the family
We're glad that you have come
To share your life with us
As we grow in love and
May we always be to you
What God would have us be
A family always there
To be strong and to lean on

II

May we learn to love each other
More with each new day
May words of love be on our lips
In everything we say
May the spirit melt our hearts
And teach us how to pray
That we might be a true family

BRIDGE

To be strong and to lean on (3x)

SONG SEQUENCE:

I, I, II, I, II, I, BRIDGE

The women who led the prayer during the Exodus now form the choir. They are accompanied by one of the three communal guitar players. The sound of the guitar is transmitted via a sound system. The lyrics of the song are presented on a handwritten poster (the backside of a former calendar) fixed on a wooden presentation board. Thus, everyone can join in the singing even without knowing the lyrics. In loud and joyful voices the choir begins to sing while clapping and raising their hands in the air.

1 INTRODUCTION

“As the world’s population continues to grow, as the cities of the Third World expand in their multi-millions, as resources become exploited and land scarce in degrees which make it progressively more difficult for individuals and families to satisfy their housing needs, there is an increasing pressure on the State and on nations to provide houses. Housing the homeless is seen as a national, even an international responsibility which can only be solved by intervention in what has been, for much of the world’s populations in the past, their own affair. Unfortunately, the solution has usually been in the form of anonymous apartments in the sky, or militaristic ranks of low-cost housing schemes. Rarely does such ‘housing provision’ take into account the culture specific communities, and the mass-produced dwelling seldom reflects the values of the family” (Oliver 1990:14).

Offering affordable housing to the poor is one of the main challenges in times of rapid urbanization especially in developing countries like the Philippines. Rural migrants move to the city in order to escape from their impoverished living conditions and in hope of a better life. Upon arrival in the city, most of them find temporary accommodation with kin or friends from the province. From the perspective of the rural migrants squatter areas offer, apart from their illegal status and poor dwelling conditions, a free or cheap place to dwell within close reach of everything necessary for daily life and thus an opportunity to secure a livelihood in the city.

However, living in a squatter area provides only a temporary solution due to the settlers' illegal dwelling status, the low quality of their makeshift dwellings, and the poor living conditions in terms of safety and hygiene. Although there are numerous examples that show that people spend their whole lives in such settlements, it is clear that squatter areas do not provide a perspective for life “*kay walay ugma*”, as my research partners called it. This expression means that the informal settlers do not know whether tomorrow will come. In addition to the constant threat of fire or other natural disasters, informal settlers are exposed to the possibility of forced eviction by the government or landowners. From the government's point of view, informal settlements pose major problems for the city. They block potential building land and are considered urban danger zones in terms of pollution and crime. That is why they are also referred to as urban eyesores. In Metro Cebu, the government is tackling the problem of informal dwelling either by offering relocation sites for informal settlers or by providing financial compensation with free transport back to the settlers’ areas of origin.

Compensation payments and the return of informal settlers to the province do not really solve the problem of informal dwelling. They rather shift the problem from one place to another. The relocation of informal settlers to low-cost housing seems to be the most suitable means against informal dwelling.

Relocation projects are initiated both by the government and by private initiatives of non-governmental organizations. No matter which institution launches such projects, they all have to deal with the question of what they should offer to the beneficiaries. This question includes, on

the one hand, which claims informal settlers may make and, on the other hand, which offers they should be satisfied with. These questions are based on another question: What do people need to lead a good life or to attain *quality of life*? In development policy debates concerned with anti-poverty strategies, this is a central issue. In the Philippines, the government has developed the so-called Minimum Basic Needs (MBN) approach:

“MBN is an approach of prioritizing primary requirements for survival, security and enabling needs. A total of ten basic needs has been formally adopted by the Philippine government as the priority consideration to attain quality of life. To address survival requirements are such needs as food and nutrition, health, water/sanitation and clothing. For security, the basic needs encompass shelter, peace and order/public safety and income/employment. For enabling purposes, basic education/literacy, people's participation and family care/psychosocial needs are deemed important to attain survival and security” (Bautista 1997: 181).

This approach is also at the heart of the socialized housing project where I have conducted a nine-month ethnographic fieldwork. It is a relocation project of a local Philippine non-governmental organization. The NGO intends to not only provide their *beneficiaries* with roofs and walls to house their bodies but rather to help them establish new homes and lives. As such, the NGO regards its socialized housing projects as an alternative to state-run relocation projects because of offering not only low-cost housing but also the so-called *Human and Community Development* (HCD) program. With the activities involved in this program, the NGO wants to enable the residents to build up an autonomous and self-sustaining community that empowers them to pave a way out of poverty. By providing the residents with a material and social structure, they lay the foundation for a change in lifestyle. This means the chance to start a new life with a perspective for the future, which they can and have to shape themselves.

During my fieldwork, I noticed that despite the NGO's good intentions and the improved dwelling conditions, conflicts arose between the residents and NGO employees. These were triggered by the above questions, namely what the residents can demand from the NGO and which basic provisions they must be satisfied with, since it is their responsibility to provide for themselves and to invest in their new homes. These experiences form the starting point for present dissertation.

This dissertation is an ethnography about the socialized housing project and its residents. It investigates the transition process from an informal, marginalized, self-organized lifestyle in squatter areas and dumpsite settlements to an institutionalized and policy-based life. This topic first evolved in the process of gathering and evaluating the data. Partly in the field. Partly at the desk back home. In other words, I went to the Philippines with the intention to conduct an ethnographic fieldwork about *the lifeworld of scavengers*, and returned to Germany with a new topic, i.e. *how lives are changed by relocation*. In retrospect, I realized that the residents were in a state of transition from their former lifestyles in squatter areas and dumpsite settlements to

their new lifestyles in the housing project at the time of my fieldwork. Therefore I decided to focus my analysis on the transition process. The analysis is guided by four main questions:

- (1) How do the residents *experience* the transition from their former informal, marginalized and self-organized lifestyle in a squatter area or dumpsite settlement to the institutionalized and policy-based life in the socialized housing project?
- (2) How do they *respond* to the new (material) living conditions?
- (3) How do they *feel* in their new living environment and;
- (4) How do they *value* the performed change of lifestyle?

These questions I will explore from a material cultural studies perspective further drawing on concepts from aesthetics. Based on these theoretical perspectives, the thesis is interested in the interrelation of people and their (built) material environment as well as in the resulting effects, i.e. the implicit mutual shaping processes.

I have designed the thesis as polyphonic ethnography to give a more holistic account of the socialized housing project and an insight into the dynamics at work in a relocation process. Therefore, I will present three different perspectives: the perspective of my research partners, the perspective of the NGO who has implemented the socialized housing project, and, of course, the perspective of the female author, who has conducted the ethnographic fieldwork, i.e. myself. The perspectives of my research partners I will highlight by the presentation of six biographies through interview extracts in chapter 3 and a series of interview statements in chapter 5. With these interview extracts, I intend to give my research partners (at least some of them) space in which they themselves can comment and describe their lives.² The perspective of the NGO, I will present mainly in chapter 4 based on information the NGO had published on its website in 2012 and which I was provided by the NGO employees. My own perspective, I will highlight by experiences from the field which I have documented in weekly reports. Extracts from my weekly reports are marked in italics.

² All names mentioned in this work are made anonymous. This applies equally to my research partners and the NGO employees.

The Ethnographic Fieldwork

From May 2011 until January 2012, I conducted the ethnographic fieldwork in the socialized housing project. It is the largest and most comprehensive resettlement project of the NGO which I cooperated with. The NGO and especially the social workers who were assigned to the project supported my research intentions. They allowed access to their members and offered me to stay in the so-called model house for the time of my fieldwork. This opportunity strongly shaped my research project and made me aware of what it means that ethnographic research is flexible and subject-oriented. It requires the ethnographer to make decisions on the spot and to develop research questions adequate to the phenomena showing up in the field. Living in the housing project enabled me to observe and participate in the everyday life of my research partners and thus, to experience their living conditions (more or less the same) with my own sensory body. Insofar, the ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in compliance with the traditional methodological approach of participant observation. The sensory experience of the researcher, through which s/he learns in the research process, plays a central role in this methodological approach. Within anthropology, this is a fact that is often either taken for granted or considered the *necessary evil* of an ethnographic fieldwork. However, it should be considered the *potential* of the ethnographic knowledge process instead. In this respect, the present book aims to contribute to the current methodological discourse within anthropology. In chapter 2, I will therefore discuss the potentials of aesthetic theories in the sense of *aisthesis* as the theory of sensory perception, first for concepts from material culture studies; and second, in more detail for the methodology of *participant observation* and as such for the *ethnographic knowledge process*. In a third step, I will outline my *being-in-the-field* (as I call it). It deals with common aspects of doing ethnographic fieldwork like approaching and entering the field, the dynamics within the process of conducting fieldwork, sensory experiences and the ethnographic learning process.

In order to better understand how my research partners experience the new living conditions in the housing project, I consider it necessary to also take past dwelling experiences into account. This access to experience is a natural consequence arising out of the theoretical approach applied in this book, which also draws on phenomenology. Within phenomenology, experience is temporally structured in ever shifting horizons between past and present, as well as future anticipations. I employed this temporal structure in the guideline questionnaire and finally also in the structure of the present thesis. It enables me to give a more holistic account of my research partners' *lifeworlds*, which, according to Miller, is something that seems to have become *passé* in mainstream anthropology (cf. 2008: 5). In chapter 3, I therefore introduce six biographies of my research partners. They are based on the guideline interviews which I conducted during the fieldwork. For the biographies, I selected excerpts dealing with the questions of the origin of

my research partners and their dwelling experiences, as well as their feelings about their new life and future aspirations. In chapter 3.7 *Retrospection: Eking out a Niche-Existence*, I will then summarize the main characteristics arising out of my research partners' descriptions in order to better understand how they evaluate the new living conditions in the housing project later on. The organized relocation from an informal to a formalized way of life initiated and shaped by a faith-based, non-governmental organization raises the question about concepts of a good life and about how people can attain quality of life. From the perspective of the NGO and associated missionaries and nuns, it is unimaginable to live a good life in squatter areas and dumpsite settlements because they consider the living conditions to be inhumane. This is surely true from an outsider's perspective. However, from the emic perspective of informal dwellers, the squatter areas and especially dumpsite settlements offer urban poor an opportunity to live a (better) life in the city than in the rural areas of the provinces, where they might be even more effected by poverty and poor education. This is not a plea for life in squatter areas and dumpsite settlements, which lack safety, proper sanitation and hygiene. Rather, my aim is to evoke a change of perspective on the life of informal settlers and on which advantages an urban niche existence can offer. Regardless of how the residents look back on their lives to date, they regard it as an existential part of their lives and as a necessary prerequisite for becoming a so-called *partner beneficiary* and ultimately a so-called *homepartner* of the socialized housing project. In chapter 4, I will then describe the socialized housing project. I will give a short introduction to its history and vision, its so-called *Human and Community Development Program* and what I consider – in reference to the visual anthropologist David MacDougall – its *social aesthetics*. Here, I will focus on what I call the *Aesthetics of a Better Life* and the *Aesthetics of Ambivalence*, which already refer to one of the major findings of this thesis. Namely, that in the process of transition the experiences of my research partners oscillate between ups and downs, achieved improvements and experienced setbacks, a strengthened sense of self and a feeling of paternalism resulting in ambivalent feelings towards the performed change of lifestyle ranging from satisfaction to dissatisfaction. It is the aim of this book to illustrate how these ambivalent feelings evolve in the process of transition and how they affect the perspectives of my research partners on the performed change of lifestyle.

In chapter 5, I analyze the transition process from a material cultural perspective focusing on concepts of the anthropology of the house and consumption studies. For the analysis, I identified three major topics as they proved to *matter* most to my research partners in the transition process. Here, I follow Daniel Miller's argument that if certain things matter to our research partners, they should also matter to us, i.e. the ethnographic researcher (cf. 1998: 12). In the

case of my research partners, the materials *concrete*, *water* and *electricity* mattered in the transition process as they make a difference in their past and present dwelling experiences. While concrete and also water (in the form of domestic water) are experienced in their palpable materiality, electricity is not experienced in its natural form but in the services produced by electric devices like light, airflow or cool air. Therefore, I argue that through everyday interaction with and consumption of these materials and their services, my research partners experience changes in their habitual (dwelling) practices that influence their well-being and satisfaction with their new way of life. What my research partners consider as *comfortable* mainly has to do with what they consider to be the *basic needs of dwelling*, i.e.

- (1) safety,
- (2) the provision with water and
- (3) electricity.

While for most of my research partners it is the first time to dwell in a house made of concrete with indoor sanitary facilities, they have been already habituated to a certain provision with and consumption of water and electricity. However, the provision with and consumption of these resources differ in the housing project from those before in the squatter areas or dumpsite settlements. By focusing on the interrelations of my research partners and the material environment they dwell in, the analysis will show the complex entanglements of the material world with other aspects of everyday life like social relations, financial obligations and policy conformity. Therefore, the main argument of this thesis is that in the transition process habitual practices, cultural values and the way in which (public and private) space is used change in the process of adaptation to the new material, political and economic conditions. In this process, the residents are first shaped by these new living conditions before they themselves give shape to their new living environment.

With regard to recent research in the field of material cultural sciences, especially in the field of the anthropology of the house, the materials concrete, water and electricity are of interest. While these materials are now taken for granted in Western living concepts, non-Western living concepts are increasingly adopting these materials as icons of modernity. In anthropology, however, these materials and their involvement in housing practices are rather ignored and represent a desideratum in research. This book therefore aims to contribute to the recent discourse in anthropological material culture studies in general and the anthropology of the house in particular by offering an insight into the dynamics at work in a relocation process.

Ethnographic Data

The ethnographic data is comprised of field experiences gathered through participant observation understood as an *active engagement in the lifeworld under study* (cf. chapter 2.2). I documented my experiences and observations in German in 37 weekly reports. Beside participant observation, I also conducted formal and informal interviews. By *informal* I understand those uncountable conversations with people from the housing project with whom I talked about current topics when we sat together, like forthcoming activities or events (e.g. a Ritual of Transfer, a general assembly, the visit of foreigners), or weather conditions and their consequences (e.g. flooding of squatter areas or the lack of rain causing water scarcity in the housing project), etc. I also talked to NGO employees and associated partners about topics concerning the housing project. These conversations I documented in memos.

By *formal interviews* I understand qualitative interviews. During my fieldwork, I conducted 38 qualitative interviews with the support of three research assistants: 7 narrative interviews, 4 group discussions, and 27 guideline-based, narrative interviews of about two to four hours. My research assistants translated the conversations and narrative interviews from English into Cebuano and vice versa. I conducted the narrative interviews and the group discussions in the first months of my fieldwork. They served to learn about the different life stories of the residents of the housing project in order to develop a research question evolving out of the field. Or, in other words, I was interested in what matters to the people and what makes a difference in their new living environment. Out of everyday experiences from living in the housing project and the first narrative interviews, I developed the guideline for the main interviews, which I conducted in the period from October until December 2011. I call these interviews guideline-based narrative interviews, because I only used the guideline for an orientation during the interviews, and otherwise tried to be open to those topics offered by my research partners. In contrast to the initial narrative interviews, I conducted the guideline-based interviews in Cebuano with the help of my third research assistant. All interviews I conducted in the model house as it turned out that otherwise our conversations would have been constantly interrupted by family members, neighbors or children. Even though the model house at first might have created a constructed conversational situation, in the end my research partners rather experienced it as a trustful atmosphere, which encouraged them to talk openly about their concerns and fears linked to dwelling in the housing project. The model house thus became a special place for my research partners, research assistants and me, and the guardian not only of concerns and fears but also of dreams and future aspirations.

During my fieldwork, I worked together with three research assistants, which is due to the fact that they were job seekers at the time I got to know them. My first two research assistants stopped working for me when they found an employment. But they kept on supporting me in their free time. Therefore, I searched for a third assistant to work with me. All research assistants were women who lived in the housing project and as such were more or less familiar with the different origins of the residents, the history and structure of the project as well as its challenges. They did not only assist me during interviews, but were my main informants and teachers; they were important gatekeepers and door openers and most of all they were my companions who also cared for me when I was ill and hospitalized. Insofar, they significantly contributed to the success of my ethnographic endeavor (cf. chapter 2.3). Three students supported me in translating the interviews from Cebuano into English; first two students from Cebu and finally a student from Koblenz, who is a native speaker of Visaya. This brings me to the topic of language, which plays a decisive role in my research.

A matter of Language

The last topic to be mentioned here is language not in singular but in plural. *Languages* have played a decisive role in my research project, namely English, Visaya and German. This book is written in English, by now the lingua franca in the scientific world in the hope that it might reach a broader readership. The most important reason for writing in English, however, derives from the field, namely that at least some of my research partners have a chance to read this book. This would not be possible, if I had written it in German, which is my mother tongue. In the Philippines, English, besides Filipino, is the lingua franca, one of the initial reasons why I decided to conduct my ethnographic fieldwork in the Philippines. That means, I hoped to be able to start the fieldwork without prior knowledge of the local language. This at least turned out to be true for my explorative field trip in August 2010. During this stay, I realized however that the people with whom I intended to work either do not speak English, or feel too shy or ashamed to speak to me in English. In English, I mainly spoke with my research assistants, colleagues and students from the University, as well as with the NGO employees and associated partners who came from all over the world. I also met some Germans. However, the people in the squatter areas, dumpsite settlements and in the housing project, as well as street vendors or taxi drivers mainly spoke Visaya. Visaya, or Cebuano, as it is mostly referred to, is the mother tongue of about 20 million people in the Islands of the Visayas and Mindanao. Therefore, I started to learn Cebuano after my explorative field trip. In Germany, there are only few Cebuano language classes available. Hence, I had to practice it on my own with the help of Visayan

language guides. When I arrived in Cebu, I took a three-week individual Cebuano language tuition. After that, I mainly learned to speak Cebuano by practicing every day with the people around me. They were actually the best teachers. Even though I mainly spoke English and Cebuano during my stay in the field, I wrote my reports, notes and memos in German for practical reasons. It was easier and faster to write in my mother tongue. As already mentioned, I conducted the first interviews in English and Cebuano with the help of my research assistants. However, I found the translations to be an interruption in the flow of conversations and time-consuming. That is why I decided to do the guideline-based interviews in Cebuano. Only in case of misinterpretations or misunderstandings, we sometimes switched to English. My efforts to talk to my research partners in Cebuano had a positive effect on our relationship. Speaking Cebuano created a more respectful and trusting atmosphere.³

The mix of languages widely vanished in the production of this book. That means, the excerpts which I will present from my reports and of the guideline-based interviews are translations. The translations cause a certain transformation of the original ethnographic data; partly as a consequence of translation; partly for reasons of better readability. This transformation is a fact entailed in the ethnographic writing process and common for empiric research in general. In contrast to modes of translations common for linguistic analysis, I decided to omit para-verbal utterances and repetitions. Yet, I tried to widely maintain the structure of the original oral statement, which was not always possible because the way people express themselves in Cebuano is different from English, as well as it would be the case for German. Selected Cebuano terms and expressions nevertheless form part of the text as *folk terms* (cf. glossary).

An ethnography neither aims nor is it able to reproduce or display reality, even though the intention to do so might exist because of the ethnographer's intimate relation to the field. In the process of ethnographic writing, the ethnographer produces a representation of her/his fieldwork experiences and the experiences her/his research partners have shared with her/him in the field.

Under consideration of theoretical concepts, the ethnographic data are analyzed from a certain perspective and thus objectified. Insofar, this book draws a very specific perspective on the socialized housing project and its impact on its residents. It is a perspective that is constituted of different perspectives, namely that of the research partners, of the NGO and of the scientifically trained ethnographer, which is myself. In this book, these perspectives are integrated in the text either as interview excerpts, excerpts from documents of the NGO or field reports.

³ This is also a topic in chapter 2.3.

These excerpts aim to make the multiplicity of perspectives transparent. Nevertheless, the perspective is far from being holistic. It rather has to be understood as a limited perspective: limited by the duration of the fieldwork, limited by the insights which could only be gained from certain areas of the field, and equally limited by personal boundaries and professional intentions. That is why access is a central matter of doing ethnographic fieldwork.

2. NEW AESTHETICS IN ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

“There are moments when the social world seems more evident in an object or a gesture than in the whole concatenation of our beliefs and institutions. Through our senses we measure the qualities of our surroundings – the tempo of life, the dominant patterns of color, texture, movement, and behavior – and these coalesce to make the world familiar or strange.” (MacDougall 1999: 3).

As human beings we live in a built material environment of which we attempt to make sense through our everyday bodily engagements. It is through our body that we experience the world we live in, not primarily cerebrally but sensory. Our senses are affected by the material culture around us. Especially through our haptic sense, our body is allowed to work on and in the world in a muscular, physical manner. Thus, our sensory apprehension of the world is an active, albeit unconscious engagement with the world (Gosden 2001: 163). What we sensually experience may be material in form, stemming from the qualities of the world of what we see, feel or hear; it can also be the result of the apprehension of an idea. Within this context, aesthetics is concerned with the *valuation* of these qualities like softness, hardness, noise, quietness, heat, coldness and so on (Morphy 1993). The way we perceive these qualities is culturally and socially shaped. Depending on the context, they may be interpreted in varying ways: a sound can be a warning; light can be intimate; touch can be an expression of bonding or an affront. This becomes especially evident in moments, when we experience something unfamiliar like a gesture, food, clothing, music, furniture, or even houses and their specific material qualities. These are the specific moments in which we consciously experience the aesthetics of everyday life. In familiar settings we are less conscious of these aesthetics. The reason (for this) might lie in what the anthropologist Daniel Miller calls the *humility of things*.

Even though it could be said that this is the *very stuff* of (social and cultural) anthropology – in research and practice – aesthetics only plays a minor role within anthropological research (cf. MacDougall 1999). Anthropologists dealing with aesthetics are e.g. interested in the nature of art, beauty, and taste in cultural comparison regarding aesthetics as a cross-cultural category (cf. Schomburg-Scherff 1986, Coote and Shelton 1992, Gell 1998, Ingold 1993). Greverus and Ritschel offer a different perspective on aesthetics in their book “Aesthetics and Anthropology. Performed Lives – Lives Performed” (2009). It deals with the topic of performance looking upon aesthetics as a *topos of the living*. The music ethnologist Markus Verne offers one of the latest anthropological contributions to the aesthetic discourse – at least within Germany. He conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Madagascar to study the specific aesthetics of music on the example of heavy metal as an aesthetic practice (cf. Verne 2014). While the former men-

tioned studies rather belong to the field of art, his research offers a link between art and everyday life. He conceptualizes aesthetic experience as a *practice of transcendence*, thus emphasizing its potential to bring about change (Verne 2015).

Aesthetics and its role within everyday life continue to be rather ignored not only within anthropology but also within sociology. In his article “Ästhetik und Gesellschaft” (2015), the German Sociologist Andreas Reckwitz points out that even though aesthetics is ubiquitous in modern society, aesthetic practices and their social role have been largely ignored within sociology since its foundation. This is surprising insofar as for the study of everyday life, the consideration of aesthetics could offer a unique access to the sensory aspects of human experience. Within anthropology, aesthetics and especially the aesthetic experiences of the researcher him/herself should be taken into account more strongly as they enable the ethnographer to gain a more profound and dense understanding of how people perceive the world, of how they feel in and respond to the world (cf. Morphy 1993; Böhme 2014). The Australian visual anthropologist David MacDougall e.g. highlights the significance of the aesthetic dimension of human experience by considering it an important social fact. He argues that the aesthetics of everyday life matters to people and influences their actions (cf. 2012:98). Therefore they should be taken more seriously. That the aesthetic dimension is widely ignored in the investigation of everyday life might lie in the fact that it means to deal with phenomena that “cannot possibly be recorded by questioning or computing documents, but have to be observed in their full actuality” (Malinowski 1922: 18). Malinowski called these phenomena the *imponderabilia of actual life and typical behavior* (cf. Malinowski 1922: 18; 28). He considered these to be central for gaining a fuller and deeper understanding of the relations of individuals to their societies (ibid.; see also MacDougall 2006: 95).

To investigate the aesthetics of everyday life, anthropology can make a crucial contribution because its methodological approach is virtually predestined for this endeavor. Doing ethnographic research includes a range of different methods, e.g. conducting different forms of (mainly) qualitative interviews, visual and written forms of documentation, social network analysis, etc. (cf. e.g. Beer 2008; Madden 2010). However, it mainly draws on participant observation. It is less a concrete methodological approach than an attitude towards the research partners and the research field – one reason why it seems to be rather mystified within the discipline. Participant observation demands the researcher to engage with the social and material environment of the *lifeworld* under study in order to gain an *emic* perspective (as Malinowski called it). This also entails the involvement of the *body* of the researcher as the main research tool. Through *being-in-the-field* (as I call it) with his/her body, s/he learns through his/her own

(sensory) experiences. From my point of view, this is actually the *potential of participant observation* and not (as it is sometimes rather considered) the *necessary evil* of doing ethnographic fieldwork in order to pass the initiation to become a (real) anthropologist. Even though it has to be acknowledged that nowadays there are attempts to *de-mystify* ethnographic research in general and participant observation in particular (cf. e.g. Powdermaker 1966, Spradley 1980, Okely 2012), the method of participant observation still lacks methodological considerations regarding the ethnographic knowledge process, which is to a great extent based on the (sensory) experiences of the researcher him/herself.

With the present study, I want to contribute both to an *anthropological study of the aesthetics of everyday life* and to the *development of a methodology of participant observation*. As such, I am interested in aesthetics understood as a theory of sensory experience in order to study the aesthetic dimensions of everyday life, i.e. the social role of aesthetics through participant observation. As such, I apply aesthetics as an analytical tool to learn about the *lifeworlds* of my research partners in two ways:

- (1) Through my own sensory experiences in the process of doing participant observation understood as active (social and physical) engagement *in the lifeworld* under study;
- (2) by investigating how the research partners express their sensory experiences in verbal or material form.

Therefore, in this book, I will apply aesthetics on three levels:

- (1) On the *methodology of participant observation*: Here, I will place the focus on the ethnographic experience and examine if aesthetic experiences, which are important within aesthetics, also play a role within the ethnographic experience and, if so, which one. Therefore, I will first give a short outline of a rather general definition of aesthetic experience, and then I will exemplify aesthetic experience as liminal experience, which seems to be fruitful contribution to reflect the knowledge process of participant observation.
- (2) As an *analytical category* to study the interrelations of humans and their material environment, which is the main subject of contemporary material culture studies. Even though aesthetics already plays a role within material culture studies, it mainly only refers to artwork and less to the perception of the material qualities of environments. Furthermore, a definition of how the term aesthetics is applied is usually left out.

(3) Aesthetics will also play a role in *writing* the ethnography. Here, selected and thematically relevant sensory and aesthetic experiences of my own will inform the ethnographic account in the form of *memoirs* (cf. Tedlock 2000: 460)⁴. I consider my own (sensory) experiences not so much anecdotes but rather an important part of my ethnographic data, which strongly informed the knowledge process this book is based on.

In this chapter, I will now define the term *aesthetics* in the sense of *aisthesis* and afterwards discuss the role of aesthetics within ethnographic research in theory and practice.

2.1 AESTHETICS

Aesthetics is generally associated with beauty and art. In the middle of the 18th century, aesthetics arose as a scholarly sub-discipline within philosophy. It can be traced back to three German Philosophers. These are Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel (1770-1831), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714-1762). Hegel understood aesthetics as the philosophy of art while Kant described aesthetics as a theory of beauty evolving to the theory of aesthetic values, its experiences and judgments (cf. Kutschera 1981). The third origin goes back to Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714-1762) who is regarded as the founding father of aesthetics as a scholarly discipline. His book *Aesthetika* published in 1750 laid the foundation for this approach⁵. Here, the term aesthetics derives from the Greek term *aisthesis* meaning sensory perception (cf. Majetschak 2007). Baumgarten was interested in the question whether there is knowledge that derives not in the form of terms or definition, judgments or conclusion, but through our senses. Thus, he expanded the concept of aesthetics as a theory of rational thinking by a theory of sensory perception.⁶ While Baumgarten was interested in establishing aesthetics as the science of sensory perception and experience, it was mainly through

⁴ Ethnographers rather tend to leave out memoirs in the main ethnographic monograph. Some ethnographers publish their personal experiences afterwards in separate articles either under their own name or using pseudonyms. The reasons vary from supposed objectivity to the possibility to publish fieldwork experiences for a more general readership and, especially when using a pseudonym, to keep this activity secret from professional peers (cf. Tedlock 2000: 460).

⁵ This, however, does not mean that aesthetics did not exist before. It can be traced back to the ancient origins of philosophy (cf. Majetschak 2007: 10).

⁶ Baumgarten was the first to emphasize the inherent value and particular cognitive performance of sensorial-tangible experience in contrast to the rather unilateral appreciation of rational, conceptual knowledge of the enlightenment. He criticized that knowledge gained through the senses is disregarded and ignored by philosophers because of its subjective character. One of Baumgarten's main arguments is that the philosopher— or, more generally spoken, — the scientist is a human being among other human beings and therefore, sensory knowledge should be taken more seriously (Baumgarten 1988). Hence, knowledge about the world or human life can only be gained through sensory perception *in* the world and not outside of it. Baumgarten's theory of aesthetics is in the field of tension between rational thinking and intuitive perception. A closer look at his theory reveals, moreover, that it is not only a theory of sensory perception but as well a theory of sensory embodiment and sensory expression (cf. also Kutschera 1981: 1). The latter he considers necessary in order to share sensory experiences.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and his book *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790) that “aesthetics became a question of judgment, that is, the question of the justification for a positive or negative response to something” (Böhme 1993: 115). The reception of Kant led to a narrowing down of aesthetics as developed by Baumgarten and finally to the establishment of aesthetics as a theory of art and of the work of art⁷.

Aesthetics in the sense of *aisthesis* as developed by Baumgarten has not received greater attention within the scientific world until recently. The reason seems to lie in the theory itself because it faces difficulties to be accepted and taken seriously under the regime of scientific reasoning (cf. also Kutschera 1981). The German philosopher Gernot Böhme (1993; 2013; 2014) describes this tradition as the old aesthetics mainly concerned with judgments rather than with experience, especially sensory experience. Departing from the concept of aesthetics in the sense of *aisthesis*, he develops a new approach to aesthetics based on the concept of atmosphere. This new aesthetics

“is concerned with the relation between environmental qualities and human states. This “and”, this in-between, by means of which environmental qualities and states are related is atmosphere” (1993:114; emphasis in original; 2014: 22-23).

In order to further distinguish his new aesthetics from the old, Böhme considers ecological questions, which require a stronger focus on the human body (*menschliche Leiblichkeit*). As he points out, it is because of ecology that the question about human states in environments arises (2014: 15). For Böhme, this is a genuinely aesthetic question. Thus, his main interest is in *how we live in, how we feel in and how we perceive* these environments. For the present book, which is interested in how the *homepartners* of the housing project experience the transition from one living environment to another and how they feel in and respond to this new living environment, Böhme offers a fruitful theoretical baseline. This I will further outline in 2.1.1 in connection with the concept of social aesthetics.

In this book, I apply aesthetics in the sense of *aisthesis* as a theory of *sensory experience, sensory embodiment and sensory expression*, taking into account the interrelation between humans and the environment they live in. In the following, I will discuss which role aesthetics can play in ethnographic research first on a theoretical level and secondly on a methodological level. Therefore, I will present the concept of *social aesthetics* developed by the Australian visual

⁷ Together with the social function of aesthetics as background knowledge for art criticism, a strongly normative orientation developed providing the ground for defining what is real, true and high art and what is not (*ibid.*).

anthropologist David MacDougall and examine its relevance for present material culture studies as shaped by David Miller. Afterwards, I will consider the relevance of aesthetic experiences for ethnographic fieldwork.

2.1.1 SOCIAL AESTHETICS AND MATERIAL CULTURE STUDIES

The concept of aesthetics as applied in this book is interested in the social role of aesthetics in everyday life. It refers to the concept of the visual anthropologist David MacDougall (1999). With the term *social aesthetics*⁸ he refers to the aesthetic qualities distinguishing and shaping a community. For him, social aesthetics are to be considered in a dialectical sense, namely as the backdrop and the product of everyday life⁹. These include, for example, the material quality and design of buildings and places, how communities make use of clothing and colors, the rules for community life, the organization of time, specific styles of speech and gesture. In this sense, the *social aesthetic field*, as MacDougall calls it, is composed of objects and practices, which give shape to the physical manifestation of a largely internalized and invisible embodied history of a community (cf. *ibid.*: 5). Here, MacDougall refers to Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*¹⁰ and what he called the physiognomy of social environments. Physiognomy not only means a system of structure, structuring dispositions, or an attribute of self. He rather understands it as *existing* "all around us concretely, in the disposition of time, space, material objects, and social activities" (*ibid.*: 5-6). They are all interconnected and influence human practices. Even though aesthetics may not be independent of other social forces, it neither is a mere residue of them. MacDougall, therefore, criticizes that aesthetic features are too often neglected or assimilated into other categories. Most often they are simply viewed as the symbolic expression of more profound forces (e.g. history or ideology) instead of regarding them as influential in their own right. Thus, his working premise is that

"the aesthetic dimension of human experience is an important social fact, to be taken seriously alongside such other facts as economic survival, political power, and religious belief. It is important because it often *matters* to people and influences their actions as much as anything else in their lives" (MacDougall 2006: 98, emphasis made by the author).

⁸ MacDougall also refers to aesthetics in the sense of *aisthesis*. Insofar, he is interested in the valuation of sensory experience but only as it bears upon the ability of people to determine what is familiar or unfamiliar.

⁹ MacDougall became interested in the social role of aesthetics during his fieldwork in a boarding school in India. He experienced the aesthetic features and patterns of the school as strongly influencing the everyday lives of the students, especially in the exercise of power (cf. 1999: 12).

¹⁰ Bourdieu's theory of practice forms the a basis for the main concepts applied in this book. As Reckwitz points out, Bourdieu caused a paradigm shift in theories of action by replacing the term *action* with the term *practice*. This theoretical shift paved the way for considering the aesthetic dimension in social and cultural studies and thus for an acknowledgment of the body and sensory experiences (Reckwitz 2015: 263).

A central term in MacDougall's concept of social aesthetics is *landscape*. With that term he refers to social environments. These are "conjunctions of the cultural and the natural" (MacDougall 1999: 3). Social landscapes are not designed by individuals but developed by collective engagement over time "employing the full range of available media: stones and earth, fibers and dyes, sounds, time and space, and the many expressive possibilities of the human body" (ibid.: 4). MacDougall calls the creative force shaping these landscapes as *collective authorship* (cf. ibid.). Every community shapes a specific sociocultural and sensory landscape, building the background for everyday life. For MacDougall it is this background that needs to be studied regarding its meaning as the *setting* for human life.

MacDougall's concept of social aesthetics offers a useful approach to taking the social role of aesthetics into account when analyzing the transition process from one living environment to another. Similar to the boarding school MacDougall studied in India, I also consider the socialized housing project as a constructed community, in which aesthetics seem to play a prominent part. Aesthetics, thus, will be analyzed as one aspect in the interrelation between the inhabitants and the material environment of the housing project. To investigate this interrelation, I will merge MacDougall's approach of social aesthetics with theoretical concepts from material cultural studies.

Investigating the aesthetic dimension of everyday life in the sense suggested by MacDougall means to study the interrelation regarding the process of the mutual shaping of humans and their material environment. Here, MacDougall applies the terms *social landscape* and *social aesthetics* as described before. Both terms are based on the anthropological model of cultural order developed by Pierre Bourdieu in his concept of *habitus*. The concept of *habitus* offers an interface between MacDougall's approach and theories from material cultural studies, which he leaves unmentioned in his writings. However, from my point of view, it is beneficial to merge these concepts to gain a fuller understanding of the dynamics active in this interrelation.

Since the cultural turn, material culture studies have undergone a change of paradigm, shifting its focus from the concept of representation to objectification (Hicks 2010). This shift entails an appreciation of the material world regarding its influences and effects on shaping cultural practices. Theories on material culture demonstrated that "social worlds are as much constituted by materiality as the other way around" (Miller 1998: 3). Since the early 1980s, especially studies conducted by Daniel Miller and his students have been shaping recent anthropological material culture studies. These focus on the interrelations of people and the (built) material environment they are living in and interacting with. Miller conceptualizes these interrelations

as dialectical processes of appropriation and objectification, developing his theory of objectification based on the Hegelian notion of self-creation through production. “The human subject cannot be considered outside of the material world within which and through which it is constructed” (Miller 1987: 86, 214). In other words, “objects make us, as part of the very same process by which we make them” (Miller 2010: 60). A crucial effect of this dialectical process is that – referring to Hegel - “once something is externalized, it can also become oppressive and we can lose consciousness that it ever was our creation” (ibid.). This is a central aspect in Miller’s theory of objectification, with which he calls attention to the intrinsic contradictions implied in the dialectical process of self-creation. His theory can be considered as a more general contribution to anthropological theory insofar as he regards this contradiction also as the basis of a theory of culture:

“Objectification is a dialectical theory of culture, not just capitalist culture, because contradiction is not just a new feature of modern capitalism, or an aspect of living in cities. It is intrinsic to the very process we describe as culture” (Miller 2010: 68).

Thus, he grounded his concept of objectification on a certain notion of culture, in which “there is no *a priori* subject which acts or is acted upon”:

“The subject is inherently dynamic, reacting and developing according to the nature of its projections and experience. As an intrinsic part of being, and in order to attempt an understanding of the world, the subject continually externalizes outwards, producing forms or attaching itself to the structures through which form may be created. All such forms are generated in history, which is the context within which that subject – generally some social fraction – acts. As a cultural theory, these forms may include language, material culture, individual dreams, large institutions or concepts such as the nation state and religion” (ibid.: 179-180).

Miller’s concept of objectification and his notion of culture reveal a phenomenological perspective on experience considering it as temporally structured. I will come back to this aspect towards the end of this section.

In his latest works, Miller more strongly highlights the nature of material objects as providing the setting for our everyday life. Without us being fully aware of their presence, they direct our actions, “make us aware of what is appropriate or inappropriate” (ibid.: 50). Despite their material presence, things have the tendency to fade out of our conscious perception. Through everyday interactions with the material world around us things become *familiar* and *taken for granted*. They rather form the backdrop of our everyday life without our awareness of how they affect us through their affordances and constraints. This is what Miller calls the *humility of things*:

“The surprising conclusion is that objects are important not because they are evident and physically constrain or enable, but often precisely because we do not ‘see’ them. The less we are aware of them, the more powerfully they can determine our expectations by setting the scene and ensuring normative behavior, without being open to challenge. They determine what takes place to the extent that we are unconscious of their capacity to do so” (2010: 50; see also 2005: 5; 2009: 4).

It becomes apparent that the interrelation of people and the material world forms the basis of human existence. Much of what we are exists as an exterior environment that habituates and prompts us. While in pre-industrial societies the interrelations between people and the material world around them is mainly shaped by production, modern societies rather rely on consumption. Following Miller, this shift has major implications for anthropology in general and for material culture studies in particular. He argues that what used to be the focus on kinship would soon be a focus on consumption practices as a main factor shaping modern cultures (cf. Miller 1995). Thus, Miller developed a new concept of material culture studies considering it as the social anthropology of consumption. In his approach, consumption not only refers to the moment of purchase but also includes the moment of choice, acquisition and usage. In contrast to consumption critics, Miller refuses to consider consumption practices as rupture destroying cultural¹¹ practices. He is rather convinced that today consumption plays a major role in cultural life like production and exchange did in pre-industrial societies (Miller 1987; 1995; see also Hicks 2010: 59). Following Miller, consumption is a social practice of appropriation “that translates the object from an alienable to an inalienable condition; that is from being a symbol of estrangement and price value to an artifact invested with particular inseparable connotations” (1987: 190). This is not only the case for material objects but also for dwelling environments as Miller showed in his studies on how tenants of Council Estates responded to the form and structure of state provided apartments in northern (1988) and southern London (2008/2009).

Miller’s approach and his concept of objectification as an immanent process of consumption practices is of great interest for the present study as it is not only grounded in a concept of culture but is also conceived as a dialectical-theory of material culture. For the analysis of the transition process and its effects, I will therefore draw on Miller's theoretical approaches for three reasons:

- (1) His research on tenants of council estates offers interesting points of reference to investigate the transition process and the interrelation of the homeowners and their provided housing units. The concept of appropriation is crucial for the analysis of the transition process from an *informal settler* to a *homeowner*. Therefore, I will place the focus on analyzing the different practices involved in the process of appropriating the provided housing units in chapter 5.1.

¹¹ Culture is not an attribute to be lost or gained, but rather a process or struggle by which people attempt to make sense of the world and make claims to social and material forms and institutions integral to the process by which they make themselves (cf. Miller 1995: 269).

(2) During my fieldwork, I experienced that consumption is a sensitive issue for the inhabitants of the housing project, which was expressed in the statement *kinahanglan me bayad tanan* (i.e. now we have to pay for everything). I learned that my research partners developed a range of different consumption practices or rather different forms of acquisition arising out of the different living conditions they looked back to. This was the case especially for the former scavengers. Thus, the performed change of life-style also had an impact on their habituated consumption practices. This will be also a topic described in chapter 5.

(3) Miller also applies the term *aesthetics* in his articles, albeit undertheorized. In his studies, the term *aesthetic* does not refer to any art terminology or judgment of beauty per se. It rather applies to issues of harmony, balance and contrast in the underlying order (2009: 7) or what MacDougall described as the ability of people to determine what is familiar or unfamiliar (2006: 98). Here, I will build the bridge between aesthetics and material culture studies.

Like MacDougall, Miller's approach to aesthetics is influenced by the work of Bourdieu. The idea that "the main process of socialization into becoming a member of any given society [is] the everyday association with practical taxonomies embodied in the order of material culture" (Miller 2009: 4) is central for his theories. Or put differently: "People are socialized into habitus through the habits of everyday life, and reproduce it in their own creations because culture is best understood as practice" (ibid.). In his article "Individuals and the Aesthetic of Order" (2009), one of the few works in which he applies the term *aesthetics*, Miller refers to Bourdieu's well-known study about the house of the Kabyle, a Berber community¹². He calls attention to the fact that even though patterns of objects are central for the constitution of social order, their contribution has largely remained unnoticed. Thus, the concept of *habitus* is interesting for Miller's theory of things insofar as it describes what he calls the *Humility of Things* (1987). Miller applies the term *aesthetics* in a rather broad sense. He derives its notion of the term *taste*, which is part of the concept of *habitus*. The term *taste*, as Miller points out, "was taken colloquially to represent the specifics of an individual's preferences in the world" (2009: 5). Aesthetic preferences, as Miller puts it, exemplify not individualism but its opposite,

"the original holistic tradition of anthropology. People are situated within a general cosmology, as much evident in their kinship and social structure, in the form of exchange and economic order, as in their beliefs and religion" (Miller 2009: 5).

¹² Here, Bourdieu takes the Kabyle house as an example to demonstrate that it is the underlying structures that give shape to unconscious expectations of the order people anticipate in many different aspects of their lives. "These underlying structures of order became second nature, that is taken for granted habits, that could apply equally to agricultural tasks, meal times, the body and kinship" (Bourdieu 2000).

Through merging the above outlined concepts of *aesthetics*, *social aesthetics* and *material cultural studies*, a broad set of instruments for analyzing the transition process is created, which aims to reveal the different dynamics at work in the process of transition in order to bring about cultural change.

The vision of the NGO is to affect a cultural change by relocation on the one hand and by human and community development initiatives on the other hand. In the process of transition, these initiatives also trigger transformations of social practices and ideas about the residents' *being-in-the-world*. While the NGO explicitly aims to bring about change through the implemented initiatives, there are also actors involved in the process of transformation which act rather implicitly. Based on concepts from material culture studies, I argue that these supposed actors are to be found in the material world of the new living environment. Therefore, the question arises which are the rather implicit dynamics entailed in the transformation process and what kind of changes do they trigger? In the present thesis I will show that the residents experience the effects of change of lifestyle most intensely in the daily interaction with the new material environment of the socialized housing project through *aesthetic experiences*, in which the people shift in temporal horizons between past and present experiences and future anticipations.

At this point, I return briefly to the connection between material culture studies and phenomenology. Anthropologists tend to draw on phenomenological approaches to reconfigure what it means to be human and to think about lived experience.

“To examine experience from a phenomenological perspective is to recognize the necessary emplacement of modalities of human existence within ever-shifting horizons of temporality. Our existence as humans is temporally structured in such a way that our past experience is always retained in a present moment that is feeding forward to anticipate future horizons of experience. This includes the dynamic ways that individual actors shift between differing attitudes in the context of their engagement with their social and physical worlds” (Desjarlais and Throop 2011: 88).

Other anthropologists who can be mentioned here are e.g. Geertz (1999) (symbolic anthropology), Bruner and Turner (1986) (anthropology of experience), Jackson (2012) (existential anthropology), Csordas (1994) (embodiment) or Classen (1993) and Howes (1991) (anthropology of the senses). In their theoretical concepts, phenomenological approaches play a role with regard to the act of *bracketing* as described by Husserl. It is by this act that an individual distances or disconnects him- or herself and thus generates a shift in his/her orientation to the taken for granted (cf. *ibid.*). Besides this, phenomenological approaches also help to understand how humans engage with their social and physical worlds. Based on the works of James, Husserl, Schütz and Mattingly, Throop develops a model of experience (cf. 2003: 233ff.), which also

assumes that *temporal orientation* structures experience. He discerns at least four temporal orientations that may each structure the experience of self and world differently:

(1) an orientation to the present moment that consists of self and world. These include: anticipations toward an indeterminate future; (2) an explicit future orientation that consists of imaginable anticipations of a determinate future that are predicate upon residues of past experience that emerges [...] even in the midst of action; (3) a retrospective glance that entails the plotting of beginnings, middles and ends over the already elapsed span of a delimited field of experience; and (4) the subjunctive casting of possible futures and even possible pasts” (Throop 2003: 234).

Throop's model of experience offers a worthwhile approach to analyze how my research partners experience the performed change of lifestyle. Namely, with regard to what Throop calls *retrospective* and *projected 'ends'*. While retrospective ends serve to partially structure the field of past lived experience, projected ends arise in the immediacy of the present moment of duration that do not necessarily ensure experiential coherence (cf. *ibid.*). The structure of the present book is based on these phenomenological reflections on experience. As already mentioned in the preface, I will draw on past living experiences of my research partners for the analysis in order to better understand how they experience the transition process from one living environment to another and how they value the performed change of lifestyle.

In the following, I will outline the concept of aesthetic experience, taking the abovementioned considerations of phenomenology of experience as point of departure. In aesthetics, aesthetic experiences play a major role with respect to the question of how we engage with the (material) world around us. Therefore, the question arises whether aesthetic experiences also play a role within ethnographic research in general and with regard to the field experiences of the ethnographer in particular. As I will show, there are points of references especially to the concept of aesthetic experience understood as liminal experience. However, whether these are actually applicable or appropriable for the ethnographic endeavor first needs to be reviewed.

2.1.2 AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE – ENGAGING WITH THE WORLD

Aesthetic experience is a form of sensory experience. A most general definition specifies aesthetic experience as the attitude towards aesthetic objects or the activity they trigger (Raters 2006: 35). This definition is mainly common in the field of art referring to how art is experienced. The German philosopher Franz von Kutschera (1981), e.g., defines aesthetic experience as a form of external experience, in which attention is directed to the sensual appearance of an object including its optical, acoustic, haptic, odor and taste properties as well as its expressive qualities (*ibid.*: 74). He further points out that the way an object appears always depends on the conditions in which it appears to someone. While aesthetic experiences are generally thought to be *intersubjective*, Kutschera argues that aesthetic experiences always have subjective

tendencies. While aesthetic experiences are commonly put in context with art, there are authors who argue that aesthetic experiences can also occur always and everywhere in daily life (cf. e.g. Seel 2004; Fischer-Lichte 2004). It just seems as if they occurred more often in the encounter with art. The German philosopher Martin Seel (2004), e.g., points out that a specific feature of aesthetic experiences is that they cannot be evoked deliberately. They only occur if the subject is open to the sensory presence of phenomena and situations that change his/her notion of what used to be real and possible. Following Seel, a simple aesthetic perception rests tranquilly in the movement of the moment. In an aesthetic experience, in contrast, the moment of experience intensifies becoming a moving outlook of a moving present (cf. Seel 2004: 76). A pragmatic approach¹³ to aesthetic experiences emphasizes that artwork, aesthetic objects as well as processes occurring in the world are perceived and processed as experiences, which expand our knowledge and help us to orientate ourselves in our actions. Schweppenhäuser (2007), e.g., illustrates the pragmatic approach of aesthetic experiences with the example of experiencing a landscape that we consider our living space (cf. *ibid.*: 24). It intensifies, increases, and expands our experiences or reduces and exacerbates them. If this is the case, the landscape is not just space and, as such, an object of our view detached of our interests and needs but a place full of relations. In this particular space, we create a place out of meaningful episodes related to our practices, aspirations, and fears. Schweppenhäuser addresses the relation between humans and the material environment they live in and engage with. He calls this engagement *Korrespondenzverhältnis*, which happens through aesthetic experiences (cf. 2007: 24). Even though Schweppenhäuser focuses mainly on art and literature, his pragmatic approach to aesthetic experiences is of interest for the present study as it offers a link to MacDougall's concept of social landscapes. Furthermore, it proposes explanatory models on how space is transformed into place, for the interrelations of humans and their material environment, and for the role of aesthetic experiences within these relations. The aspect of place-making is, moreover, of interest not only with regard to how my research partners transform the social housing project into a social landscape, namely their new home-place, but also with regard to how the ethnographer him/herself has to be considered as place-maker in the process of constituting his/her research field (Madden 2010: 38). This I will further outline in the chapter on ethnographic fieldwork.

¹³ Pragmatic here refers to the theory of practice (cf. Schweppenhäuser 2007: 24). The German sociologist Hubert Knoblauch (1998) also follows a pragmatic approach to aesthetics in order to analyze everyday communicative action as enactment in contrast to performance. His main argument is that everyday interaction links different levels of actions in a way that can be described as aesthetic orchestration (*ästhetische Gestaltung*) and thus can be regarded as the creation of order. Following Knoblauch, this order serves to coordinate daily activities and thus should be called pragmatic aesthetics (cf. 1998: 305). This definition of pragmatic aesthetics offers a fruitful basis for the conceptualization of an aesthetic approach to ethnographic research even though the methodological procedure applied in his study on *Körperformationen* differs intensely from the present book.

From an anthropological perspective, Marcus Verne offers a different, yet unmentioned aspect of aesthetic experience called *transcendence*. He defines transcendence as “the wish for and practice of going beyond the norm in a given environment” (2015: 75). Transcendence, he argues, is not only central to art and expressive forms of culture but is rather a precondition of human life and therefore needs to be taken into consideration by anthropologists. Departing from an *existential* perspective mainly influenced by the work of the anthropologists Michael Jackson (2005) and Nigel Rapport (2003), Verne approaches the notion of transcendence as an experience that drives us to strive for something in life.

“We need to imagine possible futures in order to manage our presents. And because real life is rarely perfect, these imaginations tend to represent idealized settings that, in some way or the other, transcend actual realities rather than only reproduce them” (Verne 2015: 81).

This aspect of aesthetic experience seems to be interesting for the analysis of experiences expressed by my research partners with the Cebuano term *paningkamot*. *Paningkamot* means “to strive for” or “to work hard for”, an expression commonly used when my research partners either spoke about their efforts to become a *homepartner* of the housing project or regarding their future aspirations. However, as aesthetic experiences have the peculiarity that they can only be experienced by oneself or be talked about afterwards but never be observed, I regard it as necessary to return once again to the definition of what aesthetic experiences are about in order to be able to specify the ethnographic experience in comparison with aesthetic experience. Therefore, I shortly return to Böhme and his concept of atmospheres. Böhme does not apply the term aesthetic experience. He only uses the term *sensuous experience*¹⁴ (*Sinnliche Wahrnehmung*). He understands sensuous experience in the sense of perception “as the experience of the presence of persons, objects and environments” (1993: 116). Here, sensuousness (*volle Sinnlichkeit*) implies the affective (*das Affektive*), the emotionality (*die Emotionalität*) and the imaginative (*das Imaginative*). Following Böhme, what we first perceive are not things but our experience in the act of perception. What we then actually perceive is what he calls *atmospheres*. Atmospheres thus only exist in the actual act of perception (cf. 2014: 15). Here, the difference to the traditional concept of aesthetic experience becomes obvious. The *new aesthetics* aims to overcome the subject-object or the body-mind dichotomy insofar as a sensuous experience is to be considered an event (*Ereignis*) that is ephemeral and transitory. The German theater scientist Erika Fischer-Lichte takes Böhme's concept into account in her own approach to aesthetics called “Ästhetik des Performativen” (2004). Like Böhme, she argues that within

¹⁴ Here, I use the term *sensuous experience* instead of sensory experience, as it is the term applied by Böhme in his English article.

new aesthetics it is necessary to shift the focus from meanings and values to sensuous experiences¹⁵ of an *embodied mind* (*verkörperter Geist*) (2004: 140). For Fischer-Lichte, this shift entails a radical redefinition of the term aesthetic experience¹⁶. In contrast to Böhme, who broadens the focus of aesthetics to everyday life by taking ecology into account, Fischer-Lichte remains in the field of art focusing on experiences made in theater or, more precisely, in a performance. For this context, she develops a new approach of aesthetic experience as the *experience of liminality*. She adopted the term *liminality* from the British anthropologist Victor Turner and his theory on ritual processes (cf. *ibid.*: 305 ff.). In a similar vein like rituals, a performance aims to alienate the audience from their daily life to put them into a state of profound uncertainty. This state she calls (referring to Turner) being *betwixt and between*¹⁷: in different states of meaning systems, between different modes of perception, in between different possibilities of actions. Fischer-Lichte points out that it is mainly aesthetic experiences that make performances possible, at least if they are of liminal character. It is the *experience of liminality* – the *liminality* of space and time – and the co-presence of the actor(s) and the audience, which make it possible to evoke a transformation of the person who makes the experience, at least for the time of the experience. Following Fischer-Lichte, Metten (2014) also conceptualizes aesthetic experience as *liminal experience*. In contrast to Fischer-Lichte, however, he argues that aesthetic experience arises not only in the encounter with art but also with everyday life. As such, he describes aesthetic experience as a moment, in which the familiarized way of understanding suspends and reaches its limits. In this respect, aesthetic experience forms part of every sensory perception and every moment of sensemaking. Based on Metten, it is precisely the moment of sensemaking, in which an aesthetic experience unfolds, namely because what one perceives in the first place is not making sense. Sense is rather distracted from the object of perception. An irritation of the familiarized way of perception occurs and the initial sense is suspended. Aesthetic experience is therefore characterized by a special intensity through which emotions are triggered and by its processuality that can trigger *transformations*. They have the potential to restructure value systems, transform ways of perception and alter practices (cf. Metten 2014: 384ff.).

Like Kutschera (1981), Metten questions whether aesthetic experience is to be considered *intersubjective* or not. He argues that aesthetic experience arises from the subject's experience,

¹⁵ Here, I again use the term sensuous experience as Fischer-Lichte's concept refers to Böhme.

¹⁶ An interface between Böhme and Fischer-Lichte's new aesthetics evolves regarding the event character (*Ereignishaftigkeit*), which Böhme identifies for atmospheres and Fischer-Lichte for performances. That means both focus on the experience of presence (*die Erfahrung der Präsenz des Dargestellten*) (Böhme 2014: 24; Fischer-Lichte 2004: 160ff) and thus distance their concepts from traditional aesthetics which is mainly concerned with the semiotics of art.

¹⁷ Victor Turner used the term as key term to explain the state of liminality (cf. 1969).

biography and socialization. What someone experiences as an aesthetic experience and the emotional intensity of the experience therefore varies from person to person. In this respect, aesthetic experiences can only be regarded as *intersubjective* to a limited extent, namely when people share a certain horizon of experience.

Aesthetic experience conceptualized as *liminal experience* appears to be an interesting point of departure to think about the nature of ethnographic experiences for the following reasons. Fischer-Lichte names co-presence, liminal space and time as the crucial conditions for making aesthetic experiences (in a performance), which can trigger *transformations* (cf. *ibid.*: 343). These conditions are similar to the frame conditions of an ethnographic fieldwork:

- (1) With regard to the *radical separation* of field and home in a liminal space and time putting the ethnographer in a situation of being *betwixt and between*;
- (2) With regard to the *method of participant observation*, which places the emphasis on immersion, which means *co-presence*;
- (3) With regard to *transformations*: through fieldwork experiences, the ethnographer (implicitly) provokes transformations of him/herself in order to learn about cultural norms and practices, and thus the worldviews of his/her research partners.

Nevertheless, the question arises whether it is possible to speak of aesthetic experience in the context of the ethnographic experience or not. While Metten would probably argue that ethnographic experiences are constituted by aesthetic experiences, Fischer-Lichte would probably argue against it, since she distinguishes between aesthetic and non-aesthetic liminal experiences. She defines liminal experience as an aesthetic experience that is confined in itself, while non-aesthetic experiences are those that aim to evoke transformation.

“Das heißt, bei ästhetischer Erfahrung geht es um die Erfahrung der Schwelle, des Übergangs, der Passage als solche, den Prozess der Verwandlung, bei nicht-ästhetischen Schwellenerfahrungen dagegen um den Übergang zu etwas, die Transformation in dieses oder jenes“ (*ibid.*: 349).

In this regard, the first crucial contradiction appears, namely that – as I argue – the ethnographer deliberately puts him/herself into a liminal state to evoke *cultural transformations* through his/her own experiences as the precondition for generating ethnographic knowledge.

Another crucial aspect of ethnographic experience is the process of developing meaning, contradicting the concept of aesthetic experiences according to Fischer-Lichte’s point of view. Fischer-Lichte emphasizes that first of all performances intend to be experienced rather than to be understood (*ibid.*: 276). The effort to understand a performance could only take place after the aesthetic experience and thus from memory. Based on this, she identifies two problems: first, the effort to develop meaning based on memories, and second, that remembering is a

verbal process, but the meanings generated within a performance are commonly non-verbal. That means that non-verbal meanings have to be translated.

“Wer eine Aufführung verstehen will, muss also die erinnerten nicht-sprachlichen Bedeutungen in sprachliche ‘übersetzen’, was ihn teilweise vor nahezu unüberwindliche Schwierigkeiten stellt” (ibid.: 277; emphasis in original).

The aspect of *how* sensuous experiences – to use the rather broader term of Böhme – can be translated from non-verbal to verbal and *how* the ethnographer can capture the richness and complexity of his/her lived experience (at least partially), is a crucial aspect for the ethnographic endeavor. Fischer-Lichte thus rightly points to this problem, which within anthropology – especially the anthropology of experience – constitutes a key problem (Bruner and Turner 1986; cf. also Emmerson, Fretz and Shaw 1995).

“Of all the human sciences and studies anthropology is most deeply rooted in the social and subjective experience of the inquirer. Everything is brought to test of self, everything observed is learned ultimately ‘on his [or her] pulses.’ Obviously, there is much that can be counted, measured, and submitted to statistical analysis. But all human act is impregnated with meaning, and meaning is hard to measure, though it can often be grasped, even if only fleetingly and ambiguously. Meaning arises when we try to put what culture and language have crystallized from the past together with what we feel, wish, and think about our present point in life” (Turner 1986: 33; emphasis in original).

I take Turner's comment about the *nature of anthropological research* as the root to think about the relevance of aesthetic experiences for the methodology of ethnographic fieldwork based on participant observation. Therefore, in the following section, I will briefly define the most important aspects of ethnographic fieldwork and afterwards discuss which sensory experiences are at work within the practice of participant observation.

2.2. ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK

“Anthropology distinguishes itself from the other social sciences through the strong emphasis placed on ethnographic fieldwork as the most important source of new knowledge about society and culture. A field study may last for a few months, a year, or even two years, and it aims to develop as intimate as possible an understanding of the phenomena investigated” (Eriksen 2015: 32).

For the ethnographic endeavor, the central methodological approach until today is *participant observation*. In the early 1920s, it was the British social anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) who first defined scientific standards for this methodological approach (cf. Malinowski 1922). These standards include, e.g., learning the local language, participating in the everyday life of the research partners, doing things the way they do in order to “cease to be a disturbing element” (ibid.: 8) and to grasp the “native’s point of view” (ibid.: 25). This means to learn how to see, think, feel and sometimes even behave like an *insider*.

“To understand a strange society, the anthropologist has traditionally immersed himself in it, learning, as far as possible, to think, see, feel, and sometimes act as a member of its culture and at the same time as a trained anthropologist from another culture” (Powdermaker 1966: 9).

In this very famous quote, Hortense Powdermaker reveals one of the central challenges of a participant observer, namely to oscillate between the two different practices of involvement and detachment. For her, these form the heart of participant observation, which is based on the classic epistemological premise of ethnographic fieldwork postulating a separation of thought from feeling and action. Moreover, it reveals that the ethnographer is put into two (sometimes contradicting) modes of being, which s/he might experience as *liminal* because doing ethnographic fieldwork is a balancing act between being an ethnographic researcher and being an apprentice in two senses. On the one hand, being an apprentice refers to becoming a professional anthropologist, and on the other, it implies the engagement in the everyday life of one’s research partners, i.e. to learn about their daily or professional practices and the rhythm of their everyday life, about how they interact with each other and with the material world they live in, and about how they experience and view their lives. At the same time, being a researcher requires to be highly attentive to one’s own experiences that have to be written down continuously as they form the basis of the ethnographic data. The moment of documentation is left to the researcher. It can be done during participation or afterwards. Both forms of documentation have its advantages and disadvantages, as comprehensively described by Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2007). I will return to this topic in the next section.

In ethnographic fieldwork, involvement and immersion form the necessary conditions for the ethnographic knowledge process for two reasons. Both deal with the physical presence of the researcher in the field and the impacts on the research process. In the process of collecting and retaining experience, the researcher's body plays a central role as the main research instrument,

not only because it is the medium of his/her experiences but also because his/her experiences become *embodied*. The body of the researcher has a mnemonic function, insofar as his/her experiences are not only retained in the mind but in the whole body (cf. Okely 2012). Besides that, the physical presence of the researcher (skin color, hair, age, sex, etc.) has a certain impact on how s/he is perceived and dealt with in the field. In the initial phase of an ethnographic fieldwork, the foreign researcher is often perceived as a nuisance or disturbing factor. Here, involvement and immersion become the tools not only to gradually minimize one's perception as a nuisance but also to develop a trustful relationship with one's research partners. Once settled in the field, it is through *involvement* and *immersion* that the ethnographer learns about the *lifeworld* under study by his/her *being-in-the-field* in the sense of *physical presence* and *active engagement* and thus through his/her own *sensory experiences*.

2.2.1 THE ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELD

The ethnographic field constitutes the frame of the research. It is bound in space and time and in the imaginings of the ethnographer. S/he creates his/her field out of a particular interest and for doing ethnographic research:

“[...] an ethnographic field is not equivalent to a simple geographic or social space, nor is it a simple mental construct of the ethnographer, but it does require both elements. It is the synthesis of concrete space and investigative space that defines the ethnographic field and gives it its reason for being – it exists to describe, to interrogate, to question, to problematise, to theorise and to attempt to solve questions about the human condition (Madden 2010: 39).

This is especially the case for the initial phase of the research process for two reasons. The ethnographer cannot know beforehand

- (1) whether s/he will actually get access to that specific field s/he aims to investigate, and
- (2) whether his/her pre-formulated research questions, which usually are based on a literature research at home, actually fit the local conditions.

Atkinson and Hammersley point out that within the discipline

“it is expected that the initial interests and questions that motivated the research will be refined, and perhaps even transformed over the course of the research; and that this may take a considerable amount of time” (2007: 3).

Therefore, the initial phase of the ethnographic research process is called *exploration*. Following Häuser-Schäublin, it is an important tool of participant observation, “dessen Bedeutung und Tragweite nicht unterschätzt werden darf“ (2008: 49), not to be underestimated in both meaning and consequences. It represents the pre-stage for a more systematic investigation. In addition,

I argue that *exploration* actually constitutes one of the potentials of ethnographic fieldwork and the production of ethnographic knowledge, as I will illustrate with the example of my fieldwork in Chapter 2.3. However, within the scientific world it seems to be considered as rather problematic. Especially in the process of applying for funding, it seems that funding institutions demand that the applicant already knows the supposed findings before conducting the fieldwork.

Conducting ethnographic fieldwork requires *flexibility* and *openness* of both the ethnographer and the ethnographic field. S/he has to be able to make decisions in conditions of considerable uncertainty. As I will show using my own fieldwork experiences, the ethnographic field sometimes seems to have a life of its own. While the ethnographer can control his/her thought processes and set boundaries around his/her inquiries (cf. Madden 2010: 39), s/he cannot control the behaviors and thoughts of his/her research partners. This also applies to what might happen and occur in the field. In this sense, patience and courage to *just hang around* in the field waiting for something to happen can become one of the main challenges for a participant observer (cf. e.g. Malinowski 1922; Spittler 2001). Now the question may arise, why I mention these features of the ethnographic field, which are rather common ground within anthropology. The reason here is not that these are completely new aspects but rather – as Gupta and Ferguson (1997) already pointed out almost 20 years ago – that the ethnographic field tends to be ignored as being subject to reflection. Rather, it has been considered as a “taken for granted space, in which an “Other” culture or society lies waiting to be observed and written” (ibid.: 2; emphasis in original). Thus, my aim here is to also reflect on the nature of the ethnographic field as precondition of reflection about the nature of the ethnographic experience, which – as I argue – also seems to be rather taken for granted within the discipline. Here, one reason seems to lie in the fact that with the writing culture debate anthropologists placed the focus on the question of representation and thereby seem to have lost sight of the question of experience – which also has to be represented. Based on this finding, I decided to also present selected excerpts from my reports and notes in this book, to emphasize findings with my own (sensory) experiences because also they are part of my ethnographic data.

Besides these rather general and explicit aspects of ethnographic fieldwork and participant observation, there are also central *implicit* characteristics entailed in this methodological approach. These, however, often remain unmentioned, like the consequences resulting from a radical separation of *field* and *home*.

2.2.2 SEPARATION OF FIELD AND HOME

Ethnographic fieldwork necessarily means a separation from friends and family, but also from the scientific world for a certain time – for a few months, a year or even two years or more. The separation of field and home entails at the same time a shift in the ethnographer's professional practices. This is especially the case for ethnographic fieldwork conducted in a rather traditional sense.¹⁸ In this regard, Gupta and Ferguson emphasize two distinct types of writing characterizing ethnographic work.

“The distinction between “the field” and “home” rests on their spatial separation. This separation is manifested in two central anthropological contrasts. The first differentiates the site where data are collected from the place where analysis is conducted and ethnography is “written up”. To do ethnographic work is thus to do two distinct types of writing” (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 12; emphasis in original).

From my point of view, writing is only one characteristic aspect of this shift of professional practices. In certain fields, participant observation may also involve manual work and physical labor, which rather constitutes the contrary of academic work. This is not only the case for ethnographic projects which focus on apprenticeship (cf. e.g. Jackson 1983; Stoller 1997; Spittler, 2001), but especially for those studies conducted in social settings in which the body and physical labor is mainly involved in performing everyday practices (Okely 2012). Here, the importance of the researcher's body as main scientific instrument becomes obvious. S/he learns through his/her body and thus through *sensory experiences* what everyday life of the research partners actually *feels* like. Malinowski already mentioned the importance of the *imponderabilia of actual life*, which can only be experienced by the participant observer. From the perspective of the anthropology of experience, Bruner points out that

“[t]he anthropological enterprise has always been concerned with how people experience themselves, their lives, and their culture. Traditionally, anthropologists have tried to understand the world as seen by the “experiencing subject”, striving for an inner perspective. Indeed, this is still the rationale for long-term field research, and the field tradition, in fact, is what sets anthropologists apart from such related disciplines as sociology and history. The difficulty, however, is not in the fieldwork experience, but in our conceptual apparatus for interpreting the field data, which tend to filter out experience. Most good ethnographers, interestingly enough, reintroduce vitality in their descriptive accounts by including illustrative snatches of personal narrative, bits of biography, or vivid passages from their fieldnotes (Peacock 1984). In effect, the experiential component returns to the account as a byproduct rather than as an explicit object of research. We systematically remove the personal and the experiential in accordance with our anthropological paradigms; then we reintroduce them so as to make our ethnographies more real, more alive” (Bruner 1986: 9; emphasis in original).

Bruner's comment on how ethnographers tend to deal with their own experiences shows that within the discipline there seems to be no consensus about the role of the experiences of the participant observer for the ethnographic knowledge process. However, in the course of the

¹⁸ Nowadays, different research designs are also practiced, like multi-sited-ethnography or doing ethnography at home (cf. e.g. Eriksen 2015: 32-40; Madden 2010: 37-51).

writing culture debate, attempts have already been made to overcome the underlying premise of ethnographic fieldwork which suggests that *thought* has to be separated from *feeling* and *action*. Besides Victor Turner (and Clifford Geertz), Jean-Paul Dumont¹⁹, Paul Stoller²⁰ and Michael Jackson²¹ – in retrospection on their initial ethnographic field experiences – became aware of the importance of their own experiences for their ethnographic work.²² Dumont, e.g., creates the term *anthropologizing* in order to highlight the dialectics of participant observation resulting from immersion and insertion into a concrete field situation and criticizes that within the discipline this experience seems to be rather ignored (Dumont 1978: 3-4). Stoller also criticizes the underlying premise of fieldwork epistemology. In his initial fieldwork in Niger he had to realize that exactly the opposite was true, namely that thought, feeling and action are inextricably linked (1989). In his book “Tasteful Fieldwork” he encourages ethnographers to bring the *intelligible* and the *sensible* back together and to record the complexities of the individual’s social experiences, which serve as *texture* to the landscape of the fieldworker’s notes. This texture then should also be included in writing ethnographies (ibid.: 29). Like Dumont and Stoller, Jackson criticizes that the conventional fieldwork epistemology tends to ignore the value of bodily practices and sensory experiences for the knowledge process. In reviewing his initial analytical approach on Kuranko initiation rites, Jackson realized the absurdity of the classic analytical procedure.

“With hindsight, I now realise the absurdity of this analytical procedure. In the first place I failed to take Kuranko comments at their face value and accept that the performances I witnessed were ‘just for entertainment’, or as my field assistant put it, ‘for no other reason but to have everyone take part’. In the second place I failed to accept that human beings do not necessarily act from opinions or employ epistemological criteria in finding meaning for their actions” (Jackson 1983: 332).

¹⁹ Jean-Paul Dumont reflects his relationships with the Panare Indians in a second book while in the first he focused on Panare objects, thus following the traditional standards of ethnographic fieldwork. He considers his second book a contribution to the discipline insofar as it reflects what he calls the *anthropologizing* experience, which he ignored in his first book.

²⁰ Stoller uses his second book to re-view his former ethnographic account. Not as a self-reflection in its own right but as a contribution to revising the ethnographic epistemology encouraging ethnographers to bring the intelligible and the sensible back together.

²¹ In his article “Knowledge of the Body” (1983), Jackson takes a view back on his initial analytical approach to Kuranko initiation rites. As it was common within social anthropology, he decoded the ritual activities as symbolic representations of unconscious concerns. In retrospect, he realized that the ritual activities make sense to the people at the level of immediate experience and not – as supposed by the anthropologist – only in reference to precepts, rules or symbols. He therefore suggests an approach that analyzes ritual activities as particularities of body use referring to an environment of practical activity. These particularities of body use he calls *mimetic performance* (cf. ibid.: 333ff.).

²² Within German anthropology, which seems to treat the matter of sensory experiences of the ethnographer as rather secondary, Bettina Beer (2000), Till Förster (2001; 2011) and Markus Verne (2013) have to be mentioned as those anthropologists who also highlight the importance and value of these experiences as part of the ethnographic data.

In retrospect, Jackson realized that the ritual activities make sense to the people at the level of immediate experience and not – as supposed by the anthropologist – only in reference to precepts, rules or symbols. He therefore suggests an approach that analyses ritual activities as particularities of body use referring to an environment of practical activity. He calls these particularities of body use *mimetic performance*. Following Jackson, mimetic performances arise out of habituated patterns of body use, “informed by habits instilled within a shared environment and articulated as movements” (ibid.: 334). Referring to Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, he also considers these habituated bodily practices as “collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor” (ibid.; cited from Bourdieu 1977: 72). Jackson’s approach is thus also based on the idea of an interrelation of people and the material environment they live in.

“Forms of body use (‘techniques du corps’) are conditioned by our relationships with others, such as the way bodily dispositions which we come to regard as ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ are by our parents and peers encouraged and reinforced in us as mutually exclusive patterns. Or patterns of body use are ingrained through our interactions with objects, such as the way that working at a desk or with a machine imposes and reinforces postural sets which we come to regard as belonging to sedentary white-collar workers and factory workers respectively. [...] Moreover, both stereotypical ideas and bodily habits tend to reinforce each other in ways which remain ‘set’ so long as the environment in which these attitudes are grounded itself remains stable” (Jackson 1983: 334).

In contrast to Bourdieu, Jackson is less interested in the conditions for maintaining a certain habitus (habituated ideas, experiences and bodily practices), but rather in how *transformation of habitus* occurs or is possible. In the disruption of the environment, Jackson sees a crucial aspect for triggering transformation in bodily and mental dispositions. He points out that a disruption of the environment can alter habituated bodily practices, which may then offer the possibility for new experiences and the creation of new ideas.

This was a short excursion outlining Jackson’s approach to studying the dynamics of habitus transformations, which offers a further analytical tool for the present study. However, the topic of this section is participant observation. Thus, the question may arise, what we can learn from Jackson’s critique of the conventional epistemology of ethnographic fieldwork with regard to participant observation. The answer is simple: We can learn about the *lifeworld* under study through *mimetic performance*. That means to inhabit the world of the others and to learn about the social life being perceived as *common truth* the way they do. It describes a methodological approach based on *experience* intending to *join in* and *to put oneself in the place of the other*. “Participation thus becomes an end in itself rather than a means of gathering closely-observed data which will be subject to interpretation elsewhere after the event” (Jackson 1983: 340). He further points out that

“to recognise the embodiedness of our Being-in-the-world is to discover a common ground where self and other are one. For by using one’s body in the same way as others in the same environment, one finds oneself informed by an understanding which may then be interpreted according to one’s own custom or bent, yet which remains grounded in a field of practical activity and thereby remains consonant with the experience of those among whom one has lived” (ibid.: 340-341).

Jackson’s approach to participant observation is based on phenomenological reflections on experience and offers the starting point to thinking about the ethnographic experience. From my point of view, participant observers still pay only little attention to their own (sensory) experiences, even though they are essential for the ethnographic knowledge process. The reason seems to lie in the fact that anthropologists still maintain the abovementioned (and rightly criticized) fieldwork epistemology postulating a separation of thought from feeling and action. The aim of this chapter therefore is to highlight the potentials of the researcher’s own experiences for the ethnographic knowledge process by analyzing its characteristics. This will bring us back to the initial question, whether aesthetic experiences conceptualized as *liminal experiences* play a role within the ethnographic experience and, if so, which one.

2.2.3 AN APPROACH TO ETHNOGRAPHIC EXPERIENCE

“This brings me to what anthropologists sometimes speak of as participant-observation. By this they mean that insofar as it is both possible and convenient they live the life of the people among whom they are doing research. [...] One enters into another culture and withdraws from it at the same time. [...] Perhaps it would be better to say that one lives in two different worlds of thought at the same time, in categories and concepts and values which often cannot easily be reconciled. One becomes, at least temporarily a sort of double marginal man, alienated from both worlds” (Evans-Pritchard 1973: 71).

This comment on the ethnographic enterprise points out well the challenges of an ethnographic research process for the researcher. Within anthropology, conducting ethnographic fieldwork based on the principles of participant observation is considered an extreme personal form of experience. The reason for this results from the *physical presence* of the researcher in the field under study.

- (1) S/he is subjectively involved in the community, which s/he aims to investigate objectively.
- (2) S/he is subject and object of the research project, insofar as s/he observes, is the main scientific instrument of observation, and is observed by the research partners at the same time. Being the most important scientific instrument further implies that the researcher also investigates a great deal of his/her own personality in the process (Kohl 2000: 115).
- (3) “[T]he gender, age, ‘race’ and class of the anthropologist inadvertently influences the experience of fieldwork” (Eriksen 2015: 34; emphasis in original).

From these findings, Kohl notes that the ethnographic experience – which he calls *ethnographische Fremderfahrung* - represents “eine nicht selten strapaziöse, ja manchmal sogar schmerzhaft Form der Selbsterfahrung [...]“ (Kohl 2000.: 116) – an oftentimes exhausting, at times even painful way of experiencing the self.

Atkinson and Hammersley (2007) compare ethnographic experience with the experience of the stranger or immigrant described by Schütz. Experiences of the ethnographer are similar to those of the immigrant, who as a newcomer begins to live in a group of which in the long run he expects to be either accepted or at least tolerated. Like the immigrant, the ethnographer learns that what s/he

“previously took for granted as knowledge about that society turns out to be unreliable, if not obviously false. In addition, areas of ignorance previously of no importance come to take on great significance; and overcoming them is necessary for the pursuit of important goals [...]. In the process of learning how to participate in the host society, the stranger gradually acquires an inside knowledge of it, which supplants his or her previous ‘external’ knowledge” (Atkinson and Hammersley 2007: 9).

Obviously, the everyday experience of the stranger becomes the explicit objective for the ethnographic enterprise; not as an end in itself but for scientific purposes, i.e. to gain and produce knowledge about the *lifeworld* under study. Thus, in order to transform what Schütz calls *Lebensferne* (distance) into *Lebensnähe* (proximity), the ethnographer’s experiences are the necessary condition for the possibility of this endeavor (Schütz quoted by Schröder 2014: 159). Nevertheless, it has to be taken into consideration that even though the ethnographer is interested in the everyday life of his/her research partners and thus in how they experience their everyday lives – i.e. “how they view situations they face, how they regard one another, and also how they see themselves” (Atkinson and Hammersley 2007: 3) – his/her own experiences in the field (may) differ from their experiences. Accordingly, Atkinson and Hammersley differentiate between the everyday experiences of the research partners in contrast to those of the ethnographer in the following way:

“[E]thnography is not far removed from the means that we all use in everyday life to make sense of our surroundings, of other people’s actions, and perhaps even of what we do ourselves. What is distinctive is that it involves a more deliberate and systematic approach than is common for most of us most of the time, one in which data are specifically sought to illuminate research questions, and are carefully recorded [...]. What is involved here, then, is a significant *development* of the ordinary modes of making sense of the social world that we all use in our mundane lives, in a manner that is attuned to the specific purposes of producing research knowledge” (Atkinson and Hammersley 2007: 4; emphasize in the original).

On the one hand, field experiences thus offer access to the *lifeworld* of our research partners, because of what Atkinson and Hammersley call *the ordinary modes of making sense of the social world*. On the other hand, however, everyday experiences are never the same. The reason for this inevitably arises from the phenomenological approach defining experience as bound in historicity. Likewise, the experience of people can never be exactly the same but similar to a

certain extent. This is an important methodological implication of ethnographic fieldwork and especially of participant observation: it only allows to *approximate* another *lifeworld*, but not to totally immerse in it. I mention this fact because in anthropology today, a supposed *total immersion* is considered risk to doing participant observation because of a lacking distance to the field. Within the discipline this is called *going native*. For Okely, it is a legacy of colonial discourse (cf. Okely 2012: 78-79).

Disregarding these supposed risks of participant observation, the strong personal involvement of the researcher him/herself is nonetheless one of the reasons why ethnography falls between two stools within the social sciences, namely between positivism on the one side and naturalism on the other. These contradicting positions question whether ethnography can be considered scientific or not. Positivism and naturalism deal with the impact of the researcher on the data. Both positions assume that it is possible to isolate a body of data uncontaminated from the researcher. This would, however, imply the conversion of the researcher either, “in one case, into an automaton or, in the other, into a neutral vessel of cultural experience” (Atkinson and Hammersley 2007: 15). Within social sciences this cannot be the case because, as Atkinson and Hammersley rightly point out, “all data involve presuppositions” (ibid.). They criticize that positivism and naturalism both fail to take into account that social researchers are always part of the social world they study. For them, the scientific nature of ethnology is beyond question because of the demand for methodological reflection. To meet this demand they suggest an approach that emphasizes the presence of the researcher in the field under study and thus his/her participation in that world. Here, an alleged influence of the researcher becomes a fact of how ethnographers actually produce knowledge. This concept of reflexivity thus acknowledges that the method of participant observation implies a process of mutual shaping that can evoke *transformations*. These *transformations* do not only refer to the ethnographer him/herself but also to the research partners and situations studied.

“In order to understand the effects of the research and of research procedures, we need to compare data in which the level and direction of reactivity vary. Once we abandon the idea that the social character of research can be standardized out or avoided by becoming a ‘fly on the wall’ or a ‘full participant’, the role of the researcher as active participant in the research process becomes clear. As has long been recognized by ethnographers, he or she is the research instrument par excellence. The fact that behaviour and attitudes are often not stable across contexts and that the researcher may influence the context becomes central to the analysis. Indeed, it can be exploited for all it is worth” (Atkinson and Hammersley 2007: 17; emphasis in original).

Taking these aspects together, there are two necessary conditions for an ethnographic knowledge process based on *Fremderfahrung*:

- (1) The radical separation of *field* and *home* for a certain period on the one hand, and

(2) the physical *presence* and active *involvement* of the ethnographer in the field with an *embodied mind* on the other (cf. Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 12).

Both conditions entail putting the ethnographer into *liminal states*, which strongly inform the knowledge process based on *sensory experiences*. Through the radical separation of field and home a particular kind of experience becomes possible, which enables the ethnographer to generate a particular form of knowledge derived from experience. This kind of experience is different from the researcher's everyday experiences at home as well as from those of the research partners. The ethnographer's experiences originate from a distinct research interest and heightened attention for the subject under investigation and also from everyday experiences in the field, which are bound in his/her historicity. In the following, I will attempt to define ethnographic fieldwork based on the preceding considerations and on a phenomenological approach as defined by Waldenfels, who critically analyzed the *ethnographische Fremddarstellung* (2012).

From these points of view, I consider the ethnographic field as *experienced-based*. For Waldenfels, experience is gained when something *shows* itself as *something* to someone and not when someone or something (*re-*)*presents something* (ibid.: 154). Applying this to ethnographic fieldwork, participant observation becomes a mode of *being-in-the-world* under study (cf. Atkinson and Hammersley 1994) or, as I will call it, *being-in-the-field*.

This implies:

- (1) the separation of field and home,
- (2) the *physical presence* and *active engagement*,
- (3) learning about the *lifeworld* under study through *mimetic practices*,
- (4) living in *co-existence* with one's research partners and
- (5) an *experience-based field*, i.e. being attentive to what shows itself to the ethnographer in the field, and as such to be flexible and open to responding to the field.

A key term for this experienced-based approach is the concept of *immersion*. Emmerson, Fretz and Shaw (2011) point out that

“[i]mmersion enables the fieldworker to directly and forcibly experience for herself both the ordinary routines and conditions under which people conduct their lives and the constraints and pressures to which such living is subject. [...] Immersion [...] involves both being with other people to see how they respond to events as they happen and experiencing for oneself these events and the circumstances that give rise to them” (Emmerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011: 3).

Even though immersion – as the authors emphasize – is a key issue in the making of ethnographies, the question how the researcher turns a piece of lived experience into written text is often ignored (cf. ibid.: xiii). Emmerson et al. criticize the existing dissent of ethnographers regarding

the value of field notes. While some seem to consider field notes as a means for the researcher to deal with the stresses and anxieties of living in another, unfamiliar world, others see them as a vital resource for understanding and as such as “the core of the research enterprise” (ibid.: xvi). The exemplified dissent about the value of field notes contains the abovementioned dissent about the value of liminal experiences in the field. Are they either a necessary evil the ethnographer has to endure in order to become a true anthropologist or do they form the actual potential and thus a necessary condition for the possibility of generating ethnographic knowledge? In the end, it is left to the ethnographer to decide whether his/her own experience will form part of the ethnographic data presented in the monograph or be excluded in order to prevent his/her study from being called *unscientific*. Even though the concept of reflexivity – as outlined by Atkinson and Hammersley – would actually welcome an open discourse about the researcher’s own experiences, these are far more often left out and treated as anecdotes from the field.

As I consider the present study as a contribution to the reflexive approach of ethnographic fieldwork, I will include my own experiences along with sensory experiences into the data because they strongly inform the knowledge process of my project.

Therefore, I argue that for the present project, my own (sensory) experiences of living in the housing project offer a further access to better understanding how my research partners experience and feel about the change of lifestyle in the transition process. Insofar, I apply aesthetics as an analytical tool to learn about the *lifeworlds* of my research partners in two ways.

- (1) Through my own sensory experiences in the process of doing participant observation understood as active (social and physical) engagement *in the lifeworld* under study; and
- (2) through investigating how the research partners express their sensory experiences in verbal or material form.

2.3 BEING-IN-THE-FIELD

In the previous chapter, the double-sided character of ethnographic fieldwork showed in being both a professional and highly personal endeavor at the same time. The reason for this can be derived from the paradigms already outlined which are involved in the methodical approach of participant observation. My *being-in-the-field* (as I will call it for the present case) was shaped by different roles, different ways of how I was perceived, as well as by the way I experienced myself in the interaction with the social and material environment in the field. It was a learning process based on mimetic practices, social engagement, and reflection of my experiences that mainly constitutes the ethnographic knowledge presented in this book. Therefore, the following sections serve to shed light on the process out of which my ethnographic data developed. In the

first step, I will briefly describe how I approached the field, including my initial research interest, first contacts and the phase of exploration. In the second step, I will give a short outline of how I finally entered the field, which had an important impact on the outcome of my project. In a third step, I will then describe the different dynamics which shaped my research process and gave it a new direction. Finally, I will briefly outline my experiences made in the ethnographic learning process. Here, I will put the focus on my own sensory experiences and mimetic practices which I applied as research tools during my fieldwork.

2.3.1 APPROACHING THE FIELD

In 2010, I started to prepare an ethnographic fieldwork interested in the *lifeworld* of so-called scavengers. Through the approach of social aesthetics, I first became interested in the aesthetics of waste and how it affects and shapes people dealing with it. This interest made me aware of the phenomenon of so-called scavengers. Those are people who make a living out of scavenging, i.e. gathering, sorting out and selling recyclables. It can be differentiated between two different kinds of scavengers: those who wander the streets looking for recyclables to either use or sell, and those who also live on or close to a dumpsite. Martin Medina (2008), who has conducted research on scavengers worldwide most extensively, traces the existence of this global phenomenon back to scarce resources, wars, and economic crises. In developing countries, processes of rapid urbanization also play an important role in the creation of this phenomenon. For homeless and unemployed rural migrants and urban poor, dumpsites offer an opportunity to ensure their existence in the city: They offer a free place to dwell, free building materials, sometimes even free food and, moreover, access to free resources to generate an income. Within social sciences, scavengers became of interest in the middle of the 1970s in the field of urban studies. Until recently, research projects on scavengers were mainly interested in the economic aspects of the phenomenon. Here, scavenging activities offer urban poor a niche existence within modern economy. Most researchers are interested in the role scavengers play within the urban but also the global market. The most important works on scavengers within urban studies are the articles of Birkbeck (1979) for Columbia, Furedy (1984), who conducted research in India, Sicular (1991), who investigated the phenomenon in Indonesia, and Medina (2008), who gives an overview of a range of different countries worldwide. Within anthropology, the work of William J. Keyes (1974) and Stephan Kunz (1997) are of interest. Both conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Manila. Beside mainly economic aspects of scavenging, their accounts also provide a glimpse of the *lifeworlds* of scavengers. However, as Medina rightly points out in his book, most research that has been conducted on scavengers is only based on

quantitative methods and tends to be a-historic. Furthermore, the main focus is most often placed on the economic relevance of this phenomenon and not so much on social and cultural aspects. There is a research gap dealing with the *lifeworld* of scavengers living on the dumpsite. Thus, I decided to conduct ethnographic fieldwork investigating the *lifeworld* of dumpsite dwellers, although in the beginning I could not quite imagine the full extent of this enterprise. The first question I had to answer then was where to go. Finally, the Philippines turned out to be the right place for two reasons. Firstly because of contacts which eventually provided access to the field, and secondly because of the language. In the Philippines, English, along with Filipino, serves as lingua franca. Thus, I thought it would ease the first access to the field, which it did, at least with colleagues from academia and NGO staff members. However, the people I thought to stay with during my fieldwork had only little knowledge of English due to poor or a complete lack of education. Therefore, I decided to learn the local language Cebuano, which is, after Tagalog, the second most spoken language in the Philippines. Even though Cebuano is the mother tongue of around 20,000 people, it is considered only a dialect spoken in the Central Visayas. In school, students only learn to read and write in English and Filipino but not in Cebuano. This made learning the language more difficult as there is little or only poor literature and few language classes available. Thus, I mainly learned the language in the field through interacting with the people.

Exploration – First Encounter with the Field

As outlined in chapter 2.2.1, exploration is an important tool within ethnographic fieldwork. It provides the conditions for a subject- and process-oriented research. So, in order to find out whether an ethnographic fieldwork about the *lifeworld* of scavengers is feasible, I first made an explorative field trip to the Philippines in August 2010, during which I stayed in Manila for two weeks and for another two in Cebu City. In Manila, I met the anthropologist Dr. Raul Pertierra who, since he retired, lives and teaches at UP Diliman. With him, I discussed my research plans and the possibilities of conducting the research in Manila. Additionally, I was able to get in touch with the German anthropologist, who conducted ethnographic fieldwork about the scavengers of Smokey Mountain in the late 1990s. By chance, he worked as a development worker in Cebu City at that time. He offered me to visit him in Cebu to discuss my research plans and to introduce me to a local NGO that works with scavengers. The German anthropologist became the initial *gatekeeper* of my research project. He further introduced me to a German Missionary of the Divine Word who had lived in Cebu for more than 20 years. Every day after 4 pm, he changed work place and tasks. He left his office and loaded his car with medicines and cookies

to head for the different social hot spots of Metro Cebu. There, he visited and cared for the people (young and old) living in the streets, in squatter areas and dumpsite settlements. He finished his daily tour with a visit in the red light district in the neighborhood of the main Campus of the University of San Carlos. He provided prostitutes with medical aid and contraceptives. In the two weeks of my stay in Cebu, I accompanied him on his trips to different squatter areas, to the dumpsite settlements in Inayawan, Umapad and Bankal, and to the socialized housing projects in Inayawan and Bankal. He explained the living conditions and spoke about his experiences of about 25 years of street work. These excursions provided me with a first insight into the *lifeworlds* of the urban poor population of Metro Cebu.

Short reflection of my first visit to the dumpsite settlement

When I accompanied the missionary to a dumpsite settlement for the first time, I felt very nervous and afraid. I had no idea what to expect. How people would react to my presence and how the living conditions on the dumpsite would affect me. But the car ride took most of my fears away and I felt rather excited by the time we arrived at the settlement. The regular visits of the missionary seemed to be a fixed ritual for the dumpsite dwellers. They were already waiting for him to arrive. Mainly children and women carrying babies on their arms were already standing in line waiting for cookies and medical treatment. After everyone had been supplied, he took me for a stroll through the dumpsite settlement. I felt that the people very much appreciated his weekly visits. The children greeted him with the traditional Filipino blessing-gesture, i.e. taking his hand and putting it to the forehead for receiving his blessing. This is a common gesture of showing respect to adults. As companion of the missionary, the children greeted me the same way. At first, I felt very insecure about what to do and how to behave, so I just followed him around. While walking through the settlement, we were being followed by numerous children who all tried to hold our hands and walk beside us. The missionary stopped at several places to greet people sitting in front of their huts to shortly listen to their sorrows. According to him, about 300 families with up to ten children each were living in the dumpsite settlement situated at the margins of a communal dumpsite bordering the sea. I was very surprised about how the families had established themselves in this somewhat unreal place dominated by black and gray colors, smoky air and muddy ground, but also about the extent of the infrastructure of the settlement, which I had not expected. The huts were made of light materials, either of bamboo and nipa or of plywood, carton, and tarpaulin, built in traditional style on stilts as one- or two-room buildings. Some of the settlers raised pigs, goats and chicken. I saw women sweeping the area around the huts. Some huts were fenced, e.g. with the inside of innerspring mattresses. Some households had a TV, a sound-system and a few even had a refrigerator. The missionary explained that besides recyclable materials, the scavengers also gathered raffle tickets from the dumpsite and thus won a TV or even a refrigerator, which they then mostly use as common store-room because it consumes too much electricity. The reason why I was very much surprised about this was because I had expected the huts not to have access to electricity at all. But that was not the case. Numerous black insulated cables traversed the walkways of the settlement at head height, connecting the huts inside the settlement with electric meters situated along the main road. I still remember how uncertain I felt about the nature of these wires, as the settlers also seemed to use them as clotheslines. Only later in my fieldwork did I learn that people especially in the dumpsite settlements make use of telephone wires for their electricity connections. Within the settlement, we passed by several so-called sari-sari stores offering fresh-cooked main meals and products to satisfy basic daily needs. Furthermore, I discovered an Internet café with three computers, two videoke bars, a basketball and a volleyball court. To my surprise, the settlement was equipped like a common small-scale Filipino community. When we finally returned to the car to leave, the missionary gave me a bottle with disinfection lotion and told me to clean my hands with it in order to prevent infections, especially eye-infections, from which many children there suffer. It was a weird feeling to clean my hands and wash off the traces of numerous touching hands right away. On our way back, he told me about all the hardships of this way of life, about criminal activities including violence and murder.

This was my first experience of life on a dumpsite. It was a very rich and confusing experience. From a first glimpse, I felt that life on a dumpsite is an extreme form of existence, especially regarding issues of health and safety. Nevertheless, it also appeared to be meaningful for the people. Thus, I felt encouraged to follow my research plan. The missionary gave me a positive feedback on my research intentions and thus introduced me to the local NGO which he founded in the early 1990s. I discussed my research project and interests with the Human and Community Development workers. They expressed their interest in my research project and offered me their support. Furthermore, they mentioned the prospect to stay in their socialized housing project to conduct my fieldwork with the dumpsite dwellers of Lapu-Lapu City.

Through my explorative field trip, I was able to define the first crucial aspects of my research field: my research project proved to be feasible; I was able to determine a concrete research field and to establish first contacts who would provide access to research partners. With these agreements settled, I went back home to Germany. Seven months later, in May 2011, I returned to Cebu City to start my fieldwork.

2.3.2 ENTERING THE FIELD

I used the first five weeks of my stay in Cebu City to acclimatize to the tropical conditions, to re-orientate myself in the city and to prepare the entrance to the field. Like seven months before, I stayed in a hotel situated right beside the main Campus of the University of San Carlos and opposite the office of the NGO. I signed up for a language course in Cebuano²³. Once or twice a week, I accompanied the missionary on his trips to the squatter areas or to the dumpsites. I contacted the staff of the NGO to re-discuss my research plans. I introduced myself to the staff of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology. I met students from Germany and the Netherlands who spent a semester abroad in Cebu. Thus, within only a short time, I established a supportive social network that made me feel quite comfortable in the field. Finally, I had to finally where to stay when conducting my fieldwork. Either in an apartment in the city, like most foreign researchers I got to know in Cebu did, or right in the field, which would mean in the dumpsite settlement. I was torn between fulfilling the requirements of a traditional ethnographic research - which means living with and under the living conditions of my research partners - and the desire not to make it more complicated than it already was and thus search for an apartment in the city rather than staying in the squatter area. The latter would mean that I could separate work and free time. For my research, it would mean, however, that it would

²³ The Cebuano language course was offered by a language school which had been established by a retired German teacher who is married to a Filipina. They mainly offer German language courses to local students who want to work abroad.

mainly consist of daily visits to the dumpsite community and would thus presumably be less intense than intended. After talking to the missionary and the German anthropologist, I gave up the idea of staying in the dumpsite settlement. Both had lived there for a certain time and became severely ill. Therefore, they advised me not to do it for health and safety reasons. An alternative to staying in the dumpsite settlement was still the offer of the NGO employees to stay in the housing project and thus, at least, close to the dumpsite settlement. After I visited two apartment centers, which (luckily, in the end) turned out to be fully occupied, I returned to the offer of the NGO and decided to move to the socialized housing project. Even though it was a compromise, it was at least close to the dumpsite settlement, and former dumpsite dwellers also lived in the housing project. I thus hoped that they could function as gatekeepers to the dumpsite community and that I could talk to them about their former way of life. Before I finally transferred to the housing project on June 4, 2011, the NGO employees introduced me to the main community officers. They also introduced me to my first research assistant Bella, who helped me prepare to move in. She also arranged first meetings with the *Baranggay Hall* and the MRF managers²⁴ to inform them about my research project and intentions.

On June 4, 2011, I moved from the hotel to the housing project and thus after five weeks in the Philippines finally arrived in the field. In my diary I wrote:

This is my last breakfast in the hotel for the upcoming weeks and months. In about an hour I will take a taxi to Mactan Island and move to the housing project. It will be my home for the next couple of months. How do I feel? Hmm, I am excited, nervous, happy but also a little bit afraid. Afraid of what lies ahead of me. I don't really know what is going to happen during my fieldwork, what to expect and if things will turn out well.

The taxi ride seemed to take ages. The closer we came to the destination, the more nervous I became. I was concerned about my little knowledge of Cebuano that seemed to be just enough for small talk. However, the moment I arrived in the housing project my fears gave way to excitement about the adventure lying ahead. The taxi stopped at the center of the housing project. Here, my assistant and some officers were already waiting for my arrival. Within a second, my bags were shouldered by my new neighbors and carried all the way to my house. During the monthly General Assembly in the afternoon, I was officially introduced to the community as a foreign researcher. Without prior warning, I was called in front of the assembly and handed over the microphone to introduce myself. In a few words, I explained in English who I was and I described the purpose of my stay. I also tried to make use of some Cebuano expressions, which

²⁴ The staff advised me to also present my research intentions to the manager of the Material Recycling Facility (MRF), which is located next door to the housing project. I was told that he represents an authority person for the local scavengers who now – since the dumpsite is officially closed – work for him in the MRF.

luckily contributed to the amusement and appreciation of the audience. Thus, the entrance into the field was officially fulfilled.

2.3.3 DYNAMICS IN AN ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK

Doing ethnographic fieldwork is a dynamic research process. The dynamics arise out of the methodological approach of participant observation as already outlined in chapter 2.2. In my own fieldwork, the following factors played a crucial role for its dynamics:

- (1) my physical presence and how (differently) my research partners responded to it in the course of my stay;
- (2) my research assistants and their involvement in my research project; and
- (3) the encounter with the self-dynamics of the field appearing in unpredictable conditions and limitations, which made it necessary to adapt to the circumstances of the field and sometimes to take decisions on the spot.

In the course of my fieldwork, these factors presented both the major challenges as well as the major opportunities at the same time. I suppose that this is the reason why some anthropologists call this peculiarity of ethnographic research *serendipity*. In the following I will briefly describe these three dynamic factors of my fieldwork to reveal how and why my initial research interest in studying the *lifeworld* of scavengers shifted towards investigating the transition process from an informal to a formalized way of life. I will start with how I was perceived in the field because of my physical appearance and its effects on my *being-in-the-field*.

Responses to my Physical Appearance

During my stay in the Philippines, I was often called *Amerikana*, especially outside the city centers and in the province. People, especially children, responded directly to my presence, calling out *Halla Amerikana!*, which literally meant *look, a foreigner*, or they shouted *Hey Jo* or *hey, hello my friend*. I suppose that the concept of *Amerikana* or *Amerikano* is based on colonial experiences and ideas about the American way of life, i.e. being rich, living under comfortable conditions, being in good physical shape due to a minimum of physical labor, and thus having a good life - ideas nurtured by television and stories from oversea workers, which present 10% of the total Filipino population. Almost everyone knows at least one person (a family member or friend) who lives and works abroad. *Being white* in the Philippines, I somehow experienced like a stigma, even though I have to admit that it is connoted rather positively. I only made a/very few negative experiences, e.g. where people tried to take advantage of me

by asking for money²⁵. In general, people were always kind, open and supportive, especially when I talked to them in Cebuano. Sometimes this led to rather personal conversations, in which I was asked if I was traveling alone, if I was married and if I had children. When I answered that I was not married but living in a partnership, they asked me why I would not look for a Filipino husband. At the beginning of my fieldwork, I felt somewhat affronted by this kind of personal small talk with people I just met. From my cultural background, these kinds of questions are rather private issues. On the other side, people also made comments on my physical appearance like being beautiful because of my white skin²⁶, my height and my long nose. For them, I embodied some of the main aspects of the Filipino beauty ideal. This might also have been one of the reasons why people asked me if they could take a picture with me or if they could touch my nose, which was a very strange experience too. After a while, I adjusted to this form of communication and even adopted it because it was fun and people like *traysikul* or taxi driver started to talk with me about their lives. These playful conversations further enriched my knowledge about the living conditions and the mentality of people I met. This was especially the case with those belonging to the urban poor population who mainly worked in the field of public transportation. I also enjoyed joking with the people calling me *Amerikana*. Instead of just ignoring them, I sometimes called back in Cebuano: “*wala, Filipina man ko*” meaning ‘that’s not true, I am a Filipina’, which usually caused even more surprised responses. It was mainly within the setting of the housing project where I felt uncomfortable about how my neighbors perceived and classified me because of my physical appearance and supposed (social) background. My neighbors constructed an image of my life and me, which contradicted how I *really* live back home and how I perceive myself. They assumed that I was rich, not used to physical labor – which is partly true - and had a domestic helper at home.²⁷ Therefore, it was taken for granted that, even before I moved in, the social worker not only recommended a field assistant but also a woman who offered to do my laundry, which I felt uncomfortable about.²⁸

²⁵ There were two incidents which I kept in mind with a bitter taste. The first happened, when I was looking for an apartment in Cebu City. The secretary of the manager showed me around. At the end of our conversation, she started to speak about financial difficulties, asking me if I could help her with some money. I was confused and did not know how to react. Luckily, at that time I had financial problems too, because when I arrived in the Philippines I had to realize that my new debit card did not work in the Philippines. Thus, it was easy for me to argue why I could not help her. The second incident happened in the housing project, when I was still rather new. A group of children aged between 5 and 7 addressed me in the cooperative store holding out their hands asking for money. That was a very frustrating experience in this setting. I asked the children how much they wanted and they told me five. So I gave them five, five handshakes (cf. Weekly Report, Monday July 11th, 2011).

²⁶ In the Philippines, like in other Asian countries, white skin is an ideal of beauty. Everywhere there is advertisement for whitening creams, soaps, etc. Having white skin is to some extent a status symbol expressing that someone spends a lot of time inside buildings where his/her skin is protected from the sun, while poor people spend more time outside where they are exposed to the sun.

²⁷ I mention these aspects because they were usually expressed as taken for granted ideas about my life in Germany.

²⁸ The reason here is not only that I was perceived as *Amerikana* but that people in the Philippines who have the financial means certainly have a domestic helper, something which is not common in Germany.

I tried to change their perspectives by talking about my way of life, the way I grew up in a craftsman's family and about how my parents grew up with numerous siblings on a farm. This, however, they could hardly believe.²⁹ During my stay in the housing project, I tried to live as *simple* as possible, orientating myself on what I experienced from my neighbors, i.e. through mimetic practices. When it rained at night, I got up to fetch rainwater like my neighbors did instead of relying on water deliveries. Predominantly, I traveled by public transportation riding *traysikats*, *traysikuls* and *jeepneys*, even though these were not made for people my size. I always felt too big and too heavy. I never knew where to put my legs, which usually blocked the tiny gangway. Therefore, I usually tried to sit at the entrance, where I could hop off when a passenger wanted to get out. My physical presence usually caused irritation and excitement among the passengers because foreigners only randomly use this kind of public transportation. They would rather ride a taxi, which is much more comfortable because it has air-conditioning and journeying takes less time, but is much more expensive. Furthermore, it is considered safer because snatching happens quite often in *jeepneys*.

Besides public transportation, grocery shopping is another example that revealed my social and cultural difference. While most of the residents of the housing project did their shopping either in the cooperation store or on one of the local markets, I did my shopping in the supermarket, at least at the beginning of my fieldwork. There, I bought products which the cooperative store or the markets did not offer, e.g. milk products. Whenever a neighbor accompanied me to the supermarket (except for my research assistants), s/he curiously inspected the things I put in the trolley, wondering about what it is or how much it costs. Shopping in a supermarket was something very extraordinary for my *neighbors*. Nevertheless, I experienced the curiosity of my companions as unpleasant and felt very uncomfortable in these situations. Thus, I only went to the supermarket when I was alone or with Nikita. I usually hid the shopping bags in my backpack to avoid the attention of my neighbors on my way back to the model house situated at the end of one of the two main streets. Otherwise, I experienced my way back like running the gauntlet. These moments expressed our social differences, which I usually tried to avoid to express explicitly. However, we all knew that these social differences existed no matter how much I tried to mimic their way of life. They expressed themselves in my material belongings, in the way I communicated and with whom, in my regular absence, e.g. when I stayed in Cebu for a couple of days to detach myself from the field for a short while or when I traveled to Manila and Thailand. However, they also acknowledged the fact that I *returned* and *stayed* for such a long time. While in the first couple of weeks I was either asked how much longer I would

²⁹ I also hung up pictures of my partner, my parents and siblings, my nephews and friends to show them to my visitors, who could hardly believe that I was living all alone in the house.

stay or what I was going to do with my belongings when I went back home, after about four months, a new question came up asking for the likelihood of me coming back.

Day after day in the Philippines, or especially in the housing project, my physical appearance also changed. Something not only I observed but also my neighbors. In the course of my fieldwork, I temporarily lost almost 10 kg of weight and my skin darkened. My neighbors openly talked about this, commenting that I was *mas tambuk* (fatter) on my initial arrival, that I should protect my skin better because it had already darkened. Nikita once asked me if my mother would not be concerned about my dark skin, as in the Philippines it is a sign for people who often roam around outside. This was a good chance to explain that for me tanned skin is beautiful. Besides these issues, my neighbors also commented on my feet noticing also that my soles had become harder since I arrived. Something I did not even notice myself. In contrast, I experienced aches in my back, knees and hands because of the unfamiliar physical strains involved in, e.g., cleaning practices including fetching water, weeding, or sorting out garbage. The latter furthermore caused headaches and a cough. Even though my physical appearance remained different until I left, my neighbors seemed to recognize certain physical transformations as an adjustment to their way of life. My daily involvement and personal engagement in different activities, formal or informal, also added to this impression. On the one hand, they tried to prevent me from becoming physically engaged in dirty and physically exhausting activities. On the other hand, they appreciated that I did not behave like someone who thinks she was better than them. I also performed a transition regarding my interaction with the staff. In the first weeks of my stay in the housing project, I was usually invited to have lunch, which was prepared by a woman from the community, with the NGO employees after or between meetings. At the beginning of my research, these were important get-togethers at which I learned a lot about the perspective of the NGO employees on the housing project. However, at some point, I felt it necessary to distance myself somewhat from the NGO employees because I became closer with my neighbors and could understand their perspective on their new life and its conditions in the housing project better. It was important for me to show them my solidarity in order to avoid the feeling of being considered a spy of the NGO employees. This also had an impact on my interview questions. The questions focused on the different life experiences before and after they moved to the housing project. Thus, my research partners could decide themselves to either speak about experiences with the NGO and the implemented structures, or not. The interviews also caused a change in the relationship with my neighbors, especially with those who participated in the interviews. At first, they were very nervous about being interviewed. They asked me if the questions were difficult to answer. This concern had sprung from experiences with questionnaires conducted in the housing project, e.g. in the context of need

assessments³⁰. During the interviews, I was luckily able to eliminate their initial concerns. With some of my interview partners I talked for about three to four hours. We spoke about their origin, their life in the squatter area and now in the housing project. In the first phase of my fieldwork, I conducted the interviews in English, which my assistant(s) translated. This caused long interviews with relatively little information due to breaks for translations and explanations. Furthermore, I had the feeling of not really becoming part of the conversation. The switching of languages caused interruptions and generated a distance in the relationship between my interview partners and me. These first interviews, thus, rather served to learn about the people, their life journeys and their everyday struggles. They helped me to generate new research questions, which arose out of my experiences in the field. In contrast to the questions I had developed at home, these now enabled me to focus more concretely/precisely on the real *lifeworlds* of my research partners. In the last phase of my fieldwork, I was finally able to conduct guideline-based interviews in Cebuano. Speaking in Cebuano created a more pleasant and trustful atmosphere. After the interviews, I had the feeling that my interview partners felt proud and honored because I was interested in and listened to their life stories and experiences.

It should have become apparent that the relationship to my neighbors and research partners was strongly influenced by how they physically and socially experienced me. It was actually through my physical engagement in the field that I experienced a range of transitions and dynamics in the field, namely how I became part of the community and how the living conditions in the housing project shaped my stay in the field in general and me personally in particular. In this process, my research assistants also played an important role, which I will describe in the following.

Research Assistants

My first research assistant was Bella. Bella used to be an officer and member of the Board of Directors. She was relocated to the housing project with the first batch in October 2008 and thus knew the project from its beginnings. The community development workers referred her

³⁰ During my stay in the project, the NGO conducted a questionnaire about air pollution. I participated in the meeting in which the social worker instructed the officers of the ecology committee how to conduct the interviews. The officers were instructed to only accept answers related to the topic and not just any answer. This seemed to have happened before. After the meeting I talked to one of the officers. She told me that most of the questions she neither understands nor knows the answer. Thus, she asked her daughter to accompany her for the door to door survey. Her daughter later informed me that the interviewees often asked her for the right answer in order to avoid mistakes. Only few adults living in the housing project have a high school degree. Most of them only finished elementary if they went to school at all. Therefore, their self-confidence was very poor regarding tasks requiring educational knowledge. The low educational level of the members of the housing project furthermore had a strong impact on the performance of elected officers, who quickly felt overburdened and not capable of dealing with their tasks and finally resigned before their term ended.

to me because she was familiar with the social and political structures, the inhabitants and because her English was quite good. Even before I moved to the housing project, Bella was of great support, especially at the beginning of my fieldwork, where I was still new and foreign to the people. She helped me to prepare my stay in the field, arranged meetings with the *Barangay Hall* to introduce my research project and myself. Either she accompanied me or she instructed other officers to do so. Together with her, I set up a list of potential interview partners for initial narrative and biographic interviews. She established the contact and invited them to the interviews. This was very important because she alleviated the fear of the people who did not yet know me well. She informed me about activities inside the community and invited me to accompany her to other occasions, e.g. when they went to a meeting at Metropolitan Cebu Water District (MCWD) to be informed about the latest status of the water channel constructions on Mactan Island and about the estimated costs for the water connection of the housing project. Bella got me involved in topics relevant for the *lifeworld* of the housing project and thus offered me a new research direction, which I could either follow or deny. I decided to be *open* for the opportunities *showing up* and to follow this initial sidetrack, which later paved the way for one of my main research topics, namely water consumption.

After the first interviews, Bella told me that she felt uncomfortable participating in the interviews for two reasons. Firstly, because she had difficulties to properly translate. Secondly, she felt insecure about how the interviews and what she learns about the people would influence her relationship to her neighbors. She recognized that while I would be leaving the housing project after my research, she would have to stay. Thus, I decided to find a second assistant: Nikita. Nikita lives opposite the model-house together with her mother and her sister. They were transferred only eight weeks before I moved in. The year before, she finished a Bachelor in hospitality management and had since then been without employment most of the time. She planned to go overseas to work for a cruise line but had to wait for the application until November. Her English was quite good and as she felt bored of just hanging around at home, waiting for the day to pass. She was excited to work with us. She again opened new doors for me. First of all, she introduced me to her family and made me part of it. Her mother treated me like a very special guest on the one hand, and like a daughter on the other. She introduced me to another group of occupants because she came from a different squatter area than Bella. She showed me the squatter area and the house she grew up in. We spend hours talking about the living conditions in the squatter area, their good sides and bad sides. Nikita also had a great influence on the direction of my fieldwork; she induced me to compare between past and present living conditions and how these experiences affect the occupants' *sense of comfort* and *satisfaction*. When I told Bella about Nikita, she hesitated at first, because she did not yet know

her well. But I did not listen to her bias and brought them together. Quickly, we became a good team. Their presence contributed to a trustful and relaxed atmosphere during the interviews. Bella and Nikita became friends, which I sensed through how they interacted with their bodies. But this will be the topic of a later section. With Bella and Nikita, I shared and discussed my research interests and the insights I gained. As they knew what I was interested in, I encouraged them to also ask questions in case they had the feeling that I missed out on something because of my language difficulties. Through the engagement of Bella and Nikita, the interviews became more vivid. Unfortunately for me, but luckily for them, both of them found a full-time employment only a few weeks after we started working together. In July, Nikita became employed in a travel agency. Only three weeks later, Bella was hired by the NGO as a community worker for their new relocation project for the dumpsite dwellers of Umapad. Fortunately, both continued living in the housing project and offered to support me as far as possible. Thus, I had to find a new assistant again. First, I asked an anthropology student. However, timewise that turned out to be impractical. I again needed someone from the community with time. Something that turned out to be more difficult than I thought because matching persons were either busy because they worked or studied or because they were active leaders. Through Nikita, I got to know Lori who was one of the youth leaders in the community. She grew up in the neighborhood of the housing project. They lived close to the dumpsite because her mother was a scrap buyer. They also scavenged whenever necessary. She was studying business administration in Cebu City in her last year. But at the time I had scheduled my interviews, she stopped her studies because she was not able to pay the tuition fee for the coming semester. In order to earn money, she went back to the dumpsite scavenging. When Nikita told me about her situation, I offered her to work for me, and Nikita still supported us whenever she had time. Bella, Nikita, Lori and I established a good relationship. While they supported me in my fieldwork, I advised and supported them whenever they needed help. We spent hours sitting together in my house talking about our dreams, fears and concerns. Bella dreamed of becoming a social worker. However, she did not have a high school degree which would allow her to study. She dropped out of school just weeks before she finished her degree because of pregnancy. This was 14 years ago. Nikita finished her degree in Hospitality Management the year before. Her studies were sponsored by the NGO. Since then she had been unemployed and looking for a job. She dreamed of working on a German cruise line. The year before she already applied to an agency. However, because of missing working experience she was not hired. The next application phase was scheduled for November. And Lori was hoping to return to university to finish her studies and to work in Japan. However, she gave all the money she earned to her parents in order to support her younger siblings. During my fieldwork, the model-house became a special place

not only for them but also for our interview partners. It was within these four walls, that they could talk more or less freely and openly about things, about which they could not or did not talk about with their families or friends.

The direction my ethnographic research project finally took was, as it should have become apparent, strongly influenced by my research assistants. By chance, they became my central gatekeepers and informants insofar as they offered new research issues and framed my experiences and what I learned from the interviews. Besides these two main aspects, which I just outlined, it was due to the self-dynamics of the field, that the topic of my research turned to a different direction.

Self-Dynamics of the Field

The decision to move to the housing project had a major impact on my research project. I knew that – from a methodological perspective – it was not the optimal solution, because I would not live under the living conditions which I aimed to investigate, namely those of scavengers and dumpsite dwellers. Even though it was a compromise, I felt comfortable with it because the housing project at least is situated within close reach of the dumpsite settlement, and former dumpsite settlers also live in the housing project. I hoped that they could function as gatekeepers.

The meeting with the MRF manager, who is an important figure for the scavengers, further confirmed my decision not to stay at the dumpsite settlement for safety reasons. The atmosphere during the meeting with the MRF manager was shaped by fear, insecurity and mistrust. The MRF manager seemed to be very critical and skeptical with regard to my project and me. Several times during the conversation, I had to confirm that I was not a journalist and was not going to go to the dumpsite. After the meeting, I found out that my companions were afraid of him. They feared that they or their husbands, who were working for him, could lose their employments. In order not to get them into trouble, I decided not only to focus on the dumpsite settlement of Bankal but to also to include the dumpsite community of Umapad.

Through the weekly church services I already had access to that settlement. Furthermore, there were also families from Umapad living in the housing project. The dumpsite settlement of Umapad then further came into focus for two reasons. First of all, the meeting with the MRF manager and the stories I heard about him when I was already living in the housing project further discouraged me from spending much time at the dumpsite settlement in the neighborhood. In the end, there were only four occasions on which I visited the settlement. I accompa-

nied two of my research partners from the housing project. They introduced me to family members who still lived there, showed me their former dwellings and told me about their experiences in the settlement. One time, I accompanied a group of students from Australia who came to visit the housing project and the dumpsite settlement. I realized that maybe because of my bias, maybe for other reasons, I did not really get access to the place and the people.

The second reason for choosing Umapad was that Bella's new employment as community worker in Umapad appeared like the opportunity I was waiting for to finally get access to the dumpsite settlement. She was assigned to work together with one of the NGO employees of the housing project who now was in charge of the new relocation project. I was allowed to accompany Bella to so-called *panel-interviews* with applicants and to participate in an immersion program for USC Students at the dumpsite settlement. She also arranged two interviews with dumpsite settlers. I also became involved with the visit of two German development workers who visited the different projects they financially supported³¹ and with the visit of a film team of German journalists. For a couple of weeks, I either participated in activities in the housing project or accompanied Bella to activities in the dumpsite community in Umapad. On the one hand, my interest in the *lifeworld* of scavengers intensified through the interviews and I wanted to learn more. On the other hand, however, I slowly realized that the ethnographic account I could provide about their *lifeworld* from the field I constructed would remain rather superficial and likely miss crucial aspects, e.g. cultural knowledge or beliefs connected with this way of life.

The reason for this lies in the methodological approach of ethnographic fieldwork. My experiences of the *lifeworld* of scavengers were limited to sporadic visits, i.e. I had neither lived in the settlement nor shared the experience of scavenging with them. Instead, I experienced and documented the conditions of the way of life in the housing project. Compared with living in a dumpsite settlement or a squatter area, I experienced my field-life in the model-house as relatively comfortable. Through my stay in the model-house, I quickly learned about its advantages and disadvantages. Some experiences I made myself, like the poor quality of the building materials, which suffer extremely under the climatic conditions, the remote location of the housing project and the consequences of living in a house with sanitary facilities without a running water connection. Other experiences I learned from informal conversations with my research assistants and neighbors like how they experience the transition from their former *lifeworlds* to the

³¹ This was a very interesting experience insofar as I learned a lot about the supposedly equal relationship of local and foreign partner organizations. After this visit, first, Bella's younger and also newly employed colleague was assigned for a new project and afterwards Bella too, because the project partners from Germany did not consider them capable of handling this project. For the case of Bella it is true that she was at that time still lacking her university degree. However, her competences for the job derived from her life experiences and longtime membership in the NGO. From my perspective, that was the major competence needed for this job.

present one and what it entails socially and financially. Furthermore, whenever I left the housing project to go to Umapad, my neighbors asked me *asa man ka, sa Umapad?* - meaning 'Where do you go, to Umapad?'. This question made me aware about the feelings of my neighbors, who were wondering why I was living in the housing project to conduct a research about their life but actually spending more time at the dumpsite settlement of Umapad. I realized that through my different activities – documenting my everyday experiences in the housing project on the one hand, and interviewing former scavengers and sporadically visiting the dumpsite settlements on the other hand – I constructed a completely different field than I had primarily intended. I came to realize that I would have to make a decision, namely to adjust my initial research intentions to the actual field with which I started to engage and to the phenomena which presented themselves.

Thus, I decided to shift the focus to the *lifeworlds* of the occupants of the housing project in the past, present and future. While I could describe their present living conditions, everyday activities, and the social system to which they had been transferred, I did not yet know much about their past living conditions. The only knowledge I had was what I had experienced when I accompanied Nikita or the missionary and what my neighbors had told me in numerous informal conversations at the acacia tree or the feeding place. I therefore decided to conduct qualitative guideline-based interviews with selected occupants from the housing project representing the different squatter areas and dumpsite settlements. I developed a questionnaire in English consisting of 57 questions. The questions mainly focused on the life journey of my research partners, on practical aspects of everyday life, like living conditions, access to water and electricity, and on their future aspirations. The questions were inspired by my experiences in the housing project and also in the squatter areas and dumpsite settlements. I further included questions about local habits, worldviews and aspirations, about which I learned from conversations or observations.

My research assistants also played an unintended but important role in this transition process, especially Nikita who treated me like her older sister. She introduced me to her family, relatives and friends. She showed me the squatter area and the house she grew up in. She allowed me to accompany her family and her to Bohol to visit the grave of her father on All Saints Day and to stay with them with her paternal aunt. She openly shared with me her life story, her sorrows and aspirations and became my main companion during my fieldwork.

It should have become apparent, that I constructed my research field mainly in the process of actually conducting the fieldwork. Not only through decision-making but also through its self-dynamics. This was not an easy process because, until the end, I found it difficult to give up on

my initial interests. Therein the challenges of ethnographic research are shown, firstly to be open for the phenomena presenting themselves, and secondly to learn about the *lifeworld* of the research partners through one's own (sensory) experiences and mimetic practices, which I will now describe.

2.3.4 ETHNOGRAPHIC LEARNING PROCESS

In the chapter before, I described the method of participant observation as the main methodological tool of ethnographic fieldwork. As I was interested in the aesthetics of the everyday life of the housing project, participant observation in my case required me to learn about the *lifeworld* of my neighbors through my own (sensory) experiences and through mimetic practices. How I applied these two ethnographic tools and what I experienced through them I will briefly outline in the last section of this chapter.

Sensory Experiences and Mimetic Practices in the Field

From the day I arrived in Cebu, I regularly documented my sensory experiences. In the first weeks, these contained mainly the unfamiliar odors, tastes, sounds and temperatures of the new environment and their impact on my body. There were not only smells everywhere but also sounds. Outside on the streets was the noise of road traffic composed of running engines and beeping horns, the murmurs of people walking up the streets, the voices of street vendors loudly touting their goods, laughing or crying children and *jeepney*-conductors calling for passengers. Inside buildings, there was music everywhere coming from different sources in high and low voices. Every now and then, there were people singing softly or through a microphone on one of the numerous *videoke-machines*. Tastes, smells and temperatures varied extremely between air-conditioned buildings and the *natural* condition of the street. My body had to get used to the tropical heat and humidity outside and the relative coldness inside buildings like the hotel, offices and shopping malls. I had difficulties to bear the heat outside in the streets. After spending some time in an air-conditioned room, I always thought *now it's fine*. However, as soon as I left the room, I felt like being *knocked down* by the heat again.

The air outside in the streets was filled with numerous different smells, which I sometimes found difficult to identify. It was a mixture of sweet and fermenting fruits, of barbecued meat and smoke, and the exhaust gases of the hundreds of motorcycles and cars, especially *jeepneys* and trucks spitting out black clouds of smell. Depending on the place, these different odors were more or less intense. In downtown Cebu, where I stayed for the first five weeks, these smells were quite intense because of several market-stalls along the streets and the high traffic

load. In the business districts, in contrast, the air felt light and it was easier to breathe. I always enjoyed riding the *jeepney* to the housing project. On a good day, there was the chance to quickly enjoy a fresh breath of sea air when passing by the international airport of Cebu City situated on Mactan Island on the right hand side and the seashore on the left hand side. One morning, e.g., I woke up with a taste in my mouth like the odor of the street. I experienced the whole environment as dense. Dense because of the heat filled with smells, tastes and sounds, but also densely packed with people, vehicles and buildings. Acclimatizing for me thus meant to get used to all these unfamiliar and intense sensory impressions, which I sometimes experienced like an overdose. However, they were important ethnographic data as I learned the different aesthetics of urban life through them.

In the Philippines, I always felt like a giant, as most Filipinos are much smaller than me. When riding with local transportation vehicles like *jeepnes*, *traysikuls* and *traysikats*, I usually had to squeeze myself in. When entering an informal dwelling in the squatter areas or dumpsite settlements, which are built in traditional style with bamboo flooring, I always feared that they would collapse under my feet. These sensory experiences taken together with the typical reactions of Filipinos to my physical appearance often gave me the feeling that I was *physically out of place*.

In the housing project, I also documented my sensory impressions with a focus on the characteristic aesthetic qualities of the housing project, like the different smells and sounds in the course of a weekday in contrast to Saturday or Sunday. Through this procedure, I learned about the different rhythms of everyday life, oscillating between an orientation on the natural rhythm of a day and an orientation on schedules from work, school or community meetings. I learned about the presence of things which were absent in the housing project, like the squeaky sound of a water hand pump or the sounds of hundreds of roosters, none of which was physically present inside the project except for their sounds coming from behind the wall. By documenting and reflecting on my sensory impressions, I furthermore learned about oppositional aesthetic qualities, which seemed to be characteristic of the experience of wealth versus poverty. These qualities included, e.g., tasteful versus tasteless (food or soap), soft versus hard (e.g. self-made furniture vs. upholstered furniture), cold versus hot (air inside buildings and vehicles), (spending most of the time) inside versus outside (buildings), (living in) closed versus open (buildings), (feeling) entertained versus bored, or pale versus dark (skin). In chapter 4, I will describe the aesthetic qualities of the housing project with regard to how the residents experience and value its *effects* in comparison with their former dwelling environments. They will provide the basis for the analysis of the transformation of the *lifeworlds* of my research partners since they left the squatter areas and dumpsite settlements. On the grounds of the mentioned qualities, the

feelings of the residents about their performed change of lifestyle will become transparent. As I will show, their sense of satisfaction is closely related to the individual feeling of *being at home* in the new living environment, reaching from the *level of settling in and adjusting* to the new living conditions to the *level of appropriation*.

Besides the aesthetic qualities of the material environment, I also documented the haptic entanglement of people mainly of the same sex. I learned that social proximity is practiced through touch. People seemed to be physically *connected* or *linked* with each other. They hold on to each other's shoulder or arm when walking or crossing a street. They lay a hand on the thigh of their seat neighbor. They cross their legs when sitting or lying beside each other. This is a gender specific practice mainly performed between women or between men. In contrast, haptic entanglement between a man and a woman, even if they are in a relationship or married, is rather rare. It is considered inappropriate public social behavior. Usually they have no close physical contact in public. Checking someone's hair for lice or gray hair I would also add to the phenomenon of social haptic entanglement. It is a common pastime practiced by mothers and (mainly) their female children, and friends. Most often I watched women perform this habit at the local meeting point situated under an acacia tree. From my point of view, this social phenomenon is an expression of social cohesion and sympathy. I call it a *social haptic network*.³²

Through the interaction between Nikita and Bella I became aware of this *social haptic entanglement*. Nikita and Bella met through me. Bella was reluctant towards Nikita and her family at first, as they were new to the housing project. But after a short time they seemed to become friends, which was expressed in their *social haptic interaction*. At the meetings in my house they sat close together and crossed their legs. The same happened when Lori joined our team. During community meetings, I also observed women sitting next to each other holding the thigh of the other. Later I realized that this was mainly practiced between women who are *friends*, i.e. usually women from the same squatter area. Then there was this initial aesthetic experience when Bella suddenly took my arm. We wanted to cross a busy road. She took my upper arm and virtually pushed me over the street. The moment we safely reached the other side of the street, she let go of my arm. From that day on, such situations occurred increasingly. After a while, some of my female neighbors also started to interact with me in a haptic way. Sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously. One day during a meeting in the chapel, one of my female research partners was sitting beside me. Out of a natural reflex she started to search my

³² Haptic entanglement not only plays a role in the social relationships between people but also between people and saints. People touch the body of a saint figure like Santo Niño or Mother Mary to be blessed or to experience healing. If they have physical complaints like back pain, they would first touch the body of the saint figure and then the aching place.

hair for lice, as she would do it with other women from the community with which she was close. But then, all of a sudden she realized what she was doing and stopped. She looked somewhat shocked. I just smiled at her and asked her if she found some. Her expression relaxed and she laughed. I enjoyed this moment very much. It was a very pleasant and relaxing feeling. Furthermore, it gave me the feeling that I became part of the community. Besides holding onto someone's shoulder, I felt rather timid to practice this form of social proximity. The reason was the size of my body. It felt like I would break their legs if I put mine on theirs.

Becoming part of the *social haptic network* of the community was an aspect through which I experienced a change in my relationship to my neighbors and research partners. With each further day in the housing project, but above all with each further interaction – whether it was hanging around at the acacia tree chitchatting with each other, participating in the various communal meetings or fetching rain at night – our relationships became more trustful. They showed me that I was becoming a member of their community. For them, I transformed from being an *Amerikana* to becoming (partly) a *Filipina*, i.e. one of them. I trace this transition back to my efforts to learn about their way of life through mimetic practices. This way, I experienced how my neighbors communicated with each other, applying touch, facial expressions, jokes and irony; I experienced how they bridged the gap in the water supply system by applying their own body and a range of different materials; I experienced informal and formal practices of social control; I experienced the different forms of reciprocity and concepts of shame involved; I experienced the different aesthetic qualities of relative wealth and relative poverty. These experiences were sensory experiences, which I made with my own body. Sometimes these were pleasant and joyful experiences, sometimes they were challenging, disturbing and frustrating. Sometimes they became the moving force of my entanglement. Sometimes they slowed me down or created the wish to give up and return home.

My ethnographic fieldwork, like so many others before, was characterized by many emotional ups and downs. A wild mixture of moments of confusion, frustration, pleasure and joy. My experiences made me reflect not only on the lives of my research partners but also on my own life, what it takes to lead a good life and what it takes to be happy and satisfied. These experiences have strongly influenced my ethnographic knowledge process. As it is common in ethnographic research, only a small part of this sensory ethnographic data can be explicitly presented and analyzed in the ethnography, while the largest part remains hidden in the tacit knowledge between the lines. Based on my experiences, I therefore argue that aesthetic experiences play a central role within ethnographic fieldwork. This they do insofar as they form a central part of the ethnographic learning process, especially in the initial phase of the fieldwork, in the process of making sense, when everything is still new and unfamiliar to the ethnographer.

This phase offers the ethnographer the highest potential to learn about the aesthetic dimensions of the *lifeworld* under study in all its facets. It is precisely in this phase that the ethnographer slowly and carefully explores his/her field, still with a lack of understanding. This phase is emotionally reinforced. The potential of this phase derives not from the experiences per se, but from their documentation and from the feelings they evoke. This means that more attention needs to be paid not only to things happen *in* the field but also *inside* the researcher.

In summary, learning through *sensory experiences* and *mimetic practices* gives the ethnographer access to those phenomena that Malinowski describes as *imponderables of actual life and typical behavior*. It means learning about peoples' mentalities and social (haptic) practices, which cannot simply be observed or counted, but must be experienced first-hand. As such, it should become apparent that *aesthetic experiences* play an important role in ethnographic fieldwork not only as *sensory experiences* but also as *liminal experiences* in the moments, in which the ethnographer actively engages in the *lifeworld* under study. It is through *aesthetic experiences* that the ethnographer experiences his/her status in the field as being betwixt and between – as Turner called it: between different states of meaning systems, between different modes of perception, between different possibilities of actions from which s/he aims to make sense in order to understand the *lifeworld* of the research partners in a meaningful way, not as an end in itself but as a method of learning in order to write about it. From this point of view, I argue that *aesthetic experiences* not only arise in confrontation with art, artwork or performance, but also in our daily engagement with the world we live in.

3. STRIVING FOR A BETTER LIFE IN THE CITY

Each year, hundreds of thousands of migrants from rural areas in the Philippines come to Metro Manila, Metro Cebu or other urban centers searching for a *better life*. More than half of the Filipino population already lives in urban areas. Rural-urban migrants are driven to the cities following invitations and job offers from kin, province mates or friends. However, the provision of productive employment and adequate housing for the masses of migrants is a challenge for the metropolitan cities. Thus, as Pinches (1994) points out, the emergence of urban slums is the outcome of this massive movement of rural poor into the cities.

“The development of a privately controlled urban real estate market coupled with vast income differences, and the practice of land hoarding and speculation by members of the urban elite made access to legal accommodation, either through ownership or rent, impossible for large numbers of people” (Pinches 1994: 19).

Despite these realities, rural poor keep on moving to the cities to seek their fortune and to escape the impoverished conditions in the provinces. This is also the life story of most of the so-called *beneficiaries* of the socialized housing project and of my 26 interview partners. Only a small number of them grew up in the squatter areas or dumpsite settlements from which they transferred to the housing project. Most of them look back on an eventful life journey leading from different places in the Visayas to the metropolitan areas like Manila and finally Cebu. In the following, I will present selected parts from six interviews with research partners from the housing project because, as Pertierra once pointed out:

“One of the easiest ways to begin to understand the complex - and often seemingly contradictory - belief systems, practices and strategies [people] use in daily life is to introduce the individuals whose stories are integral to the research” (2011: 46).

The interview excerpts are intended to give an insight into the various biographies of my research partners and their former living conditions in the countryside as well as in the urban squatter areas and dumpsite settlements. My research partners speak about their lives in the provinces and about what made them move to the city. They talk about their hopes and ideas for a better life, the importance of family ties and duties and the importance of education. Furthermore, they give insights into the *lifeworld* of scavengers and their connectedness with the dumpsite. Besides these very personal aspects, my interview partners speak about how their life has changed through moving to the housing project and how they value the transition from their former informal lifestyles to the formalized way of life in the housing project. I regard this background information as necessary because they enable us to get a better understanding of how my research partners experience the transition to the institutionalized and policy-based life in the socialized housing project and how they value the performed change of lifestyle.

The selected biographies are representative of the life stories of all my research partners who lived in different squatter areas and dumpsite settlements of Metro Cebu before they transferred to the housing project. For the biographies, I have assembled questions and answers from the interviews, which focus on the following questions from the guideline (Appendix):

- (1) Where did you grow up and how many times in your life did you move?³³
- (2) Why did you move to a specific settlement(s)?³⁴
- (3) Please describe the places you lived before regarding dwelling materials and living conditions.³⁵
- (4) How do you feel about the living conditions in the place where you lived before?³⁶
- (5) How is your life now since you moved to the housing project? Do you experience major changes?³⁷
- (6) What would you like to reach within the next ten years?³⁸

3.1 ATE CLARA – *TRY AND TRY UNTIL YOU SUCCEED*

Results from the interview conducted on November 8, 2011:

Ate Clara is 44 years old, married and mother of three daughters aged 21, 13 and 10, and grandmother of one grandchild. She grew up in Cebu City in a house made of light materials. The house was built on a private lot, which her mother rented from the owner. After high school, Ate Clara first went to Manila and then came back to Cebu where she got married. She is a professional hairdresser and works in a parlor in Mandaue City. For about twenty years, she and her family lived in the squatter area from which they transferred to the housing project. They transferred on April 8, 2011. Ate Clara's story is presented here for the following reasons: Growing up in Cebu City, she only became an informal settler after getting married. She is one of the few female *homepartners* holding a high school degree and the only one to have worked in the same profession since she graduated, namely as a hair dresser. Being a hairdresser is an important part of her identity, especially, as I will indicate in detail later, because it enabled her to emancipate from kinship ties. In the selected parts of the interview Ate Clara speaks about

³³ Question 5.

³⁴ This question usually arose out of the conversation.

³⁵ Question 6.

³⁶ Question 51.

³⁷ Question 31.

³⁸ Question 58.

kinship ties, about the advantages of holding a degree and about her motives for becoming an informal settler. She describes the environmental conditions and the aesthetics of the squatter area and how these affected and shaped her life.

Mel: You worked in Manila?

Ate Clara: Yes, in the salon. I was baptized there with my auntie in Angeles, Pampanga. My auntie married a Black American and when Mt. Pinatubo³⁹ erupted their house was covered in lahar. [...] Yes, I was running for safe ground during that time.

Mel: And your aunt, Ate?

Ate Clara: We parted ways when Pinatubo erupted. I was thankful that when I arrived in Manila I had some skills that got me hired in a salon. I was a member of the Ricky Reyes of the Filipino Hair Dresser Cooperative. If you could imagine the life I was living then, all alone in Manila with no relatives or friends⁴⁰. After one month of working there I was able to go home because I already saved enough for my fare going home. I was never able to contact my auntie but I think they were rescued by the Air Force. I was able to ride a bus when the eruption happened. That experience scared me a lot because it was my first time. [...]

Mel: Why did you move to Maharlika? Did you know the people there or not?

Ate Clara: We didn't move to Maharlika directly. At first, we moved close to the parlor in which I worked. There we rented a place. Then, the youngest of my husband got married and also wanted to live in our place. Thus, we decided to look for a different place to live. We were lucky. We started looking for a place in Maharlika, which is part of baranggay Tipolo. There my husband met his uncle ... suz, we hadn't seen him for years. We were surprised and he wanted to know what we are doing here. We explained that we are looking for a place to move or to rent. He said, 'don't rent, just move to this place.' I looked around, there was no drainage system, it was muddy, [...] the bridges were made of bamboo [...] so my husband said to me: 'Clara, what do you think?' I started thinking that I will just put up with it in order to save the rent and I said that the children will have to do the same! So I finally said, 'well for sure, we will be able to cope if you want to live here,' because I knew he would say to me 'how shall we manage if we have to pay rent of 1500, 1500 would be the rent' so let's just save the money and buy bamboo posts! So he said, 'ok we just make a small one in the size of 8 by 12.' He liked the idea and asked me 'do you like it too, Clara?' I also liked it even though it was a squatter area. [The houses were built very close together] I don't think it reached a meter. At that time in 1991 there was already an offer for a relocation program, so we thought we would just relocate afterwards. Having that prospect to be relocated afterwards, it was ok for me. So when we moved I realized how narrow and noisy

³⁹ Mount Pinatubo is an active stratovolcano on the island of Luzon. On June 15th, 1991 the volcano erupted and produced the second largest terrestrial eruption of the 20th century. The effects of the eruption were felt worldwide. In consequence of the eruption 875 people died, although tens of thousands of people were evacuated beforehand.

⁴⁰Ate Clara emphasizes the absence of relatives and friends meaning that she had no place to go regarding accommodation, social support and assistance. However, she had the advantage of being a professional hairdresser and being a member of a cooperative. Thus, she could rely on an alternative social support system replacing the kinship-based system. For people who miss the financial means to pay for an accommodation, the presence of relatives or friends is crucial when being at a foreign place.

it was, halla!! Halla!, people were singing⁴¹ here and there, there were quarrels from one to three in the morning between married couples! When you went further inside, everywhere people were singing till late in the night [...] We could hear the conversations of our neighbors, like 'What time did you come home last night?' and 'The money was all spent on mahjong.' I would cover my ears not wanting to hear all this and I said to myself I would go crazy here. Hilda's place near the chapel is also so noisy because of the kids playing on the computers for rent. They stay there early morning not minding their classes [...], but we put up with it, we just endured it. I constantly told myself that there will be a relocation program. But then I didn't follow up. Then a housing program was offered I also didn't follow up, at first I applied but then didn't participate. I told myself, well, it seems as if it is not meant to be for me but the time for me will come. That's it, how many years did it take until I moved here (housing). [...].

Mel: Did you have a CR⁴² in Maharlika?

Ate Clara: Yes but others didn't. It was located near Nikita's place. There were a lot of houses there. Then they were demolished and the settlers were asked to relocate⁴³. They are now living in Tingub housing. They were friends of ours. One reason why they were asked to move was because during floods the water could not flow because of so many 'bundles of joy', a lot of garbage dumped in there. When it rains, it floods.

Mel: How do you feel about the place where you lived in the past?

Ate Clara: I feel ashamed when they [relatives] come to the squatter area because one time they looked for me, 'hui, Clara can you stand it here in the squatter area? This is how you live?' So I said, 'well, I don't have to pay rent', that was what I said. My relatives started laughing until my uncle came and said 'why don't you come back home?' and I told them I was better off living there than to hear them recount the favor they gave me by letting me live there. I don't mind living there [in the squatter area] anyway because it gave me a sense of independence and I even reminded them that I finished high school on my own effort by being a working student and that now my siblings all depend on me. I remembered my deceased Tita who told me we should only take foreigners⁴⁴ as husbands so that life would be easier for us. I told her that it's not good to be instantly rich. It's better to be rich because of one's own hard work. Vergie also told me the same that if we marry a Pinoy we would be crawling on the ground (indication of being so poor) so it was better to marry a non-Pinoy. [...] My Tita who favored my cousins was not fortunate with them though because once they married those foreigners their attitude changed. [...] I think they're selfish and can no longer remember their roots. [...] I would rather be living in the squatter areas than living in a nice house but no longer have relations with family. I told my Tito that we better cut our relations because he does not approve of my living conditions but I'm proud of myself living here because not once did I badger him. My cousin's husband went there personally to see my house only to mock me describing it as a place for the pigs and I got so mad

⁴¹ 'Singing' refers to the practice of singing *videoke* (karaoke), as it is called in the Philippines. Usually, people practice it on high volume so that the sounds resound through the settlement.

⁴² CR is the abbreviation for Comfort Room. In the Philippines, it is the term commonly used for a bathroom.

⁴³ In 2011, the government passed a law prohibiting the construction of dwellings within a so-called three-meter-easement zone, meaning three meters from rivers, channels and the sea shore in order to prevent flooding.

⁴⁴ 'Marry a foreigner' is a common advice in the Philippines for young female adults. The advice contains the idea or the hope that the family will benefit from it. Like my assistant who was told by her uncle to better marry a foreigner in order support her family. At that time she was seeking for a job after graduating from college. Her uncle reminded her of the costs 'they' supposedly invested in her education without any returns yet.

that I drove them out and shouted, 'Get out of here! I didn't invite you here to criticize me.' After that I never visited their place whenever they are here in the Philippines. They even questioned how we could afford this place when we don't have money and I would just be quiet and think that this is the Lord's gift to me. [...] They would tell me to look for a better place but they won't help with the expenses anyway so better live this life and stand on my own feet than try to suit them and hear all those bad things. [...].

Mel: What is for you the biggest change since you moved here?

Ate Clara: There have been a lot of changes. In our house before, our children would play and run and jump all over the house but I would not allow them because the foundation of our house was weak. No matter what you put in the foundation of the house the floor would still sag because the soil was soft. Now that we are living here, I even tell my children they can jump all they want. Every day was an uncertainty for us living there because we didn't have an opportunity to purchase the land, so any time we could be driven out of there. Unlike here, where we pay for the land through installment until we clear the debt and become landowners.

Mel: How do you feel about the way you live now?

Ate Clara: Now? Very big differences, the changes are big! [...] Because there in the squatter area, it's noisy, the house was ugly because it was only small. Here it's big, made of concrete, what else. There [...] the money was quick, then your house is ugly. [...] here your house is nice, much nicer are the ways of making money. We are still new, we adjust, you have to adjust, that's it for me, but hopefully we will cope with it. [...] There are a lot of trials. Try and try until you succeed. You are still adjusting to where to put yourself and consider the different people here for their personalities, their likes and dislikes; so you kind of hesitate whether to make a move on getting to know them. I also think about whether I might do something wrong or make it seem like I'm doing things my way. In Maharlika no one cares what you do, but here, there are policies that one must follow and if one does not want to follow them then s/he is not welcomed to live here but I'm still adjusting to these things. [...]

I also like it [here] because in Maharlika there are no policies. This place is regarded as a community where everyone is assumed to follow everything to be in order and it has also influenced me to practice a few policies of my own towards my children. I was able to implement the cleanliness policy in our home also just like when we have meetings in the community and then clean the meeting place after. I also tell my husband to plan for his year but he comments that it's just like our year planning also. I tell him that it's important to make plans no matter how small as long as we have a guide. There are people, though, who can't live their life following policies so they would rather not live here because they do not want someone running their lives. I don't really know because it's their own thing but I do believe the policies are there to keep things in order and for everyone to have a guide to prevent chaos. [...].

Here, I like it because you get to own your house after the full payment and we want to secure a place for our children. We also believe that there is still room for development no matter how long or how short we will be here, just like what happened in Maharlika. It took time before a road was built there. Before, the shore was just there and after some time there was a big building so things will also change here because there are still a lot of potential areas for development. We would never know if some establishment will be built near here that could employ us. Sometimes when I'm alone I ask God why I'm this tired, why I'm here in this place, when I was

still new here. I wondered how I ever got here when it was so tiring to walk around here when we first moved in. Time passed and I even forgot my asking why I was sent here. I was able to find the answer to my question that I was here because although at first I didn't want to join the line-up I eventually considered it because of my husband. I questioned him on why he wanted to be here when we were very unsure of our livelihood when we moved here, but then he also questioned me on why I wanted to live in a place where it was very uncertain how long we could live there. He also told me that that place changed me - I quickly get nervous or panic when I hear the sirens of the ambulance; when I see people running I ask them why they are running. You also couldn't sleep well in that place because it was too noisy at night and when the stress builds up because of the lack of sleep I would go to our place at Labangon and sleep there because it was taking a toll on my body. [...].

Mel: What would you like to achieve within the next ten years? For you and for your children?

Ate Clara: Would I still even be alive by then? [...] But I'm already old by that time. [...] I wish that the house would still be stable and I would just be in the house. [...] If the girls get married they are going to be with their husbands so I guess I'm going to be alone so I'll stay in the home for the aged. But really I can't really tell what the future is going to be but I can only hope that things will be peaceful and that I have something to eat (laughing) and life wouldn't be so hard. [...] I really want them to finish their studies and they get to decide what they are going to take in college. I want them to be degree holders because I guess it's the first step towards having an easier way of life. One child also wants to work with the police services to be a police officer and I commented that it would be nice to have a daughter working with the police. I want my eldest to be a teacher and she also likes to be one because you get to help children but there isn't a definite plan yet.

From the presented parts of the interview with Ate Clara two major topics can be carved out:

- (1) the interrelation of kinship ties, education and living conditions; and
- (2) the challenges entailed in the process of adapting to a new living environment. I will briefly discuss these two topics in the following as they contain cultural patterns and mentalities, which are common especially for urban poor people in the Philippines, as well as aspects entailed in the process of transition.

In the Philippines, it is common practice that relatives living in the city offer accommodation to newcomers. After the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo, Ate Clara escaped to Manila on her own as she lost track of her aunt in the chaos of the disaster. Her membership in a Filipino Hair Dresser Cooperative enabled her to quickly find an employment and a place to stay as there were no relatives to stay with in Manila. Through her income she was further able to return to Cebu without needing financial support from others, which in most cases would be relatives. Being independent of the financial support of her relatives seems to be important to her. This becomes apparent again when she talks about her motives for becoming an informal settler. The fact of being financially independent of her relatives together with the opportunity to dwell without

paying rent outweigh the disadvantages entailed with the living conditions of a squatter area. Thinking about her relatives, she feels ashamed and proud at the same time about living in a squatter area: ashamed because of the impoverished living conditions, which becomes obvious when she speaks about a visit of her cousin-in-law who called her house a *place for the pigs*; and proud because of not relying on the support of her uncles or aunts but rather being able to manage her life on her own and even being able to financially support her younger siblings. Her house in the housing project thus becomes a kind of reward for her longstanding endurance, which she considers as a gift from God.

The conflict described by Ate Clara between her and her relatives touches a central aspect in the Philippine society. Kinship ties are relevant regarding accommodation and financial support. In this respect, the story of Ate Clara reveals how education enables urban poor women to emancipate from kinship ties on the economic level while keeping up the commitment to the family. This becomes evident in her comment in which she distances herself from her cousins who married foreigners in order to improve the family's life. Those marriages to foreigners seem to generate a change in commitment to family members at home. This is at least a common experience and opinion in the Philippines, i.e. on the one hand, marrying a foreigner is considered a means to escape poverty, but then when living abroad they neglect their family obligations. Or, as pointed out by Ate Clara, "their attitudes changed. ... I think they became selfish and no longer remember their roots."

The second major topic of the interview deals with the challenges entailed in the process of adapting to a new living environment. For her, moving to the squatter area meant to endure the insecure living conditions for the benefit of minimal living expenses – crucial aspect for urban poor in securing their existence. She experienced her life in the squatter area as *insecure* regarding the stability of their house, which she expresses by using the attributes *soft* and *weak*; and regarding their illegal status as informal settlers, i.e. facing the constant risk of demolition. In the housing project, on the contrary, she experiences the process of adapting more as a process of adjusting; not so much on the environmental level, as it was the case in the squatter area, but far more on the social level. In the housing project, everyday life is shaped and guided by the so-called *Occupancy Rules and Deeds of Restrictions*. The residents strictly have to comply with these policies. Violations are punished and can, in case of recurrence, lead to the exclusion from the housing project. Furthermore, Ate Clara describes the different impacts of living in the squatter area on the one hand and living in the housing project on the other hand. Referring to her husband's comment, she points out that the uncertainties of the squatter life became an extreme psychological burden experienced in the form of constant stress, anxieties and sleep

deprivation. These feelings vanish, at least to a certain extent, after moving to the housing project. They seem to shift towards new challenges in the form of the communal policies. Ate Clara does not yet seem to be completely confident that she will be able to conform to the challenges posed by the housing project's policies. Nevertheless, she also recognizes the positive aspects of the policies as providing guidance in her life, which she did not experience before. Thus, she mentions that she has already implemented a couple of policies in her family, like cleanliness and year planning. Even though it feels like a burden for her, she recognizes that policies are there to keep things in order and for everyone to have a guide to prevent chaos. The way Ate Clara explains how she experienced life in the squatter area in comparison with life in the housing project suggests that these experiences are aesthetic ones, which occurred in her engagement with the different living environments. They also reveal the effects of certain atmospheres of the squatter area and how she, or differently spoken, her body responded to them, e.g. with anxiety and stress.

There is one more important aspect I would like to highlight. It includes Ate Clara's perspective on the state of development of the housing project. She considers the housing project as *unfinished*. From her point of view, there is still *room* and *potentials* for development which, as she recognizes, might still take time to happen but she will be there to see and be part of them. This perspective is important, insofar as it shows her positive attitude towards a future in the housing project as well as a sense of being part of its development. However, what does not become clear is how she considers her part in the development and whether it will be an active or rather a passive part.

3.2 ATE LORNA – *WORKING HARD FOR A DECENT HOUSE*

Results from the interview conducted on November 15, 2011:

Ate Lorna is 54 years old and mother of four children aged 26, 25, 23 and 16. She and her children live opposite the model house. My research assistant Nikita is her oldest daughter. Through her I became part of the family and Ate Lorna took care of me as if I was her daughter. For about 16 years, Ate Lorna lived in Maharlika, a squatter area situated in Mandaue City bordering an industrially used river. She grew up in the province of Bohol with ten siblings. Their livelihood depended on farming. As it was not enough to provide for the family, Ate Lorna started mat making at the age of seven to earn some extra money. She was constantly absent from school and finally stopped after grade five. At the age of 14, a neighbor, who lived with his family in Manila, employed her as a maid to look after his child. She sent the money

she earned home to support her siblings. At the age of 27 she returned home to Bohol. There, she married a man from her hometown, who was a coconut wine maker.

Ate Lorna: [...] When our son was born my husband left. He went to Cebu because it was really very difficult for us in the past because our livelihood in Bohol, he made wine of coconut [...] and I made banig. That was our work in Bohol. Since I gave birth to my son it wasn't enough for us. Thus [my husband] thought if we stay there [in Bohol] he can't send his children to school because his income was just enough to buy food. Only for food that wasn't tasty! Difficult! Then when my son was five months old, he worked as houseboy here in Cebu at Seaman's [...]. There he worked as houseboy. But then he got sick and came back home. The city hall helped us with the medicines. After he recovered, he decided to go back to Cebu [...] to work as houseboy again. He also took training to become a security guard. So he applied [...] at Centurion⁴⁵ and took training for becoming a guard. He was already away for six months for his training. He didn't send any letter to us. So I thought he's missing. [...]. Our house there in Bohol, it was only small. It was close to a chapel. I was lucky because there was a free feeding held by DSWD⁴⁶ near the chapel near to my house and they saw me swinging my baby using my feet only, while my hands were busy mat making. Then someone came and asked where my husband is. I told them we don't have any contact since he went to Cebu, about two months already. I didn't further think about the interview, while still waiting for financial support from my husband. Then after three months I was surprised the Municipal Hall called me and they gave me something from the government. I got something from ... I received rice, bulgur, a sack of yellow corn, after they had interviewed me about my husband's whereabouts. I was happy because without my knowledge the one who interviewed me is the one who could help me. I'm telling them that I'm paid 10 pesos for mat making, from this I'm able to buy rice for the children. I only ate banana. [...] I was surprised they supported me then, my poor neighbors also kept on asking but they couldn't avail it because they have their husbands with them. I wasn't allowed to give them something because it was provided for my children and me. I felt sorry for them. So, during nighttime I gave them something, they also liked to eat from it. From that time on I was supported every month. After four or five months DSWD came and offered me to live with them for a good offer to send my children to school, so we went with them, giving my assistance to house chores while my husband was still missing. After six months I received a letter with money from my husband, I decided directly to skip without any permission from them. I went to Cebu to my husband. He had work already as security guard in Cebu Mel, so we have already money, so we started to rent a house. This is our situation now! (hehe ... laughing with tears ... smiling). He had supported us through his income as a security guard; [the NGO] also supported us from Inday⁴⁷ in kindergarten, to Tata, to Lara.⁴⁸ [The NGO] supported Inday until College.

Mel: How many times in your life did you move? Please describe the different places briefly.

Ate Lorna: I moved nine times. [In Bohol] our house was very small. The walls were made of nipa and woven bamboo panels, the floor made of wood [...]. There

⁴⁵ Centurion is a Security Agency in Cebu City.

⁴⁶ DSWD is the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

⁴⁷ Inday is the Cebuano form of address for a woman younger than Ego. Parents also call their daughters Inday or with the abbreviation Day.

⁴⁸ Tata and Lara are the family nicknames of the youngest son and the youngest daughter.

was a living room and one spare room. We also had a CR [...]. My mother owned the land [...]. We lived close to our relatives, my siblings. Only five of my siblings are left there. The others live in Manila, there in Bohol it's five because we were ten siblings. One was a twin. [In Cebu] the materials were the same, but our house in Mandaue was big because we rented it out. But regarding the materials, in Bohol there was nipa on top of our house, then in Mandaue it was corrugated iron. [...] There were eight rooms. We rented out seven. My children used one room. [...] The ground floor is rented out, the second floor was ours. [...].

Mel: *Why did you move to Maharlika? Did you know the people there?*

Ate Lorna: *Some we knew, some we didn't, because that time we came from Pusok. There we rented a lot, [...] only the lot. Then we constructed a dwelling, it was only the lot that we rented, then we ... the place in Mandaue so we moved there because we didn't have to rent the lot, the lot was from the government. We rented out the house in Pusok but things didn't work out well thus we broke it down. We built extra space here [in Maharlika] and made use of the materials. [...].*

In Maharlika it's difficult, frightful. [...] dangerous because of fires, because the dwellings are built closed-packed. Then during rain the water rises, it reaches the floor of the houses. [...] You can't go outside because the water reaches up to your belly, but at our place only up to the feet because it divides up to the center because there we have footbridges. [...] There, it is first of all frightening; it's difficult there, frightful, in case of rain, fire, that's it you are afraid of when you live there. [...] If the rain is heavy, little children jump from the bridge and bathe in the creek. [The water is] very dirty, it comes from the creek. The children aren't aware of it. [...] it's also noisy because of the many children, then sounds, and there are quarrels, then children who just disregard their parents, they wander around there outside, pick up things to make money, sometimes use rugby⁴⁹. The children there, sometimes they terrify me. [...] When you are not used to it, it's frightful, because before I wouldn't go outside because I was very nervous. In the past there was a fire where we dwelled; or people got together in front of my house. Then there is a videoke bar, it never closes, people always sing and drink. I was afraid there would be quarrels, especially when Dodong⁵⁰ went there I was terrified. That was also the reason why we rented a place there in Basak Pardo. [...] We rented a house there because my body felt different, living there became an almost unbearable nervous strain, it seemed as if I wouldn't make it for another year. We rented the house in Basak for 1500 for almost one year. Then we went back to our house because it was difficult for my sons because my sons didn't always come there because it was too far away, so they just went to our house [in Maharlika]. It made me sad to see them starving so I also went back home to our house.

Mel: *In the past when you lived in Maharlika it was close to Parkmall⁵¹, right?*

Ate Lorna: *We went there because you didn't have to pay for fare, you could just walk. There were a lot of free food tastings (laughing), free tastings. Yes, on Saturdays, Sundays we would go there [...] we kept on going back, there were different salads, beverages, ham (meat?), noodles. No fare to go there, then sometimes around 9 pm they had a sale like buy one take [two] so we went there ... fruits then really, we went there to have a shake in the evening. We were so noisy (laughing),*

⁴⁹ Rugby is the expression for sniffing glue.

⁵⁰ Term of address for a man or boy who is younger than ego. Parents also call their sons *Dodong* or with the abbreviation *Dong*.

⁵¹ Parkmall is a Shopping Mall located in walking distance of ten minutes from the squatter area where Ate Lorna lived before she transferred to the housing project.

we would go home by around 10 pm because sometimes we would buy salad. You bought half a kilo because after 9 pm everything was so cheap then. When we came home by around 10 pm we were very noisy (excited), we ate together inside our place, my children and I, only us, it is very exciting there because you wouldn't say that you ... [need] money, really you go to the mall, you just can walk there. We were also happy in the past, [...] in the past when my oldest daughter and my oldest son were working, we would go there to eat roasted meat (hmmm...), sometimes my daughter would pay for it, sometimes my son, we would go there and eat together. I would say afterwards, 'suz! now we have finished eating without doing the dishes' (laughing). Then my youngest would come to me and say: 'Ma, we are so noisy, we should feel ashamed.' My oldest daughter and my oldest son started laughing, and I said, 'now we had something tasty to eat and don't even have to clean dishes, when we are full, we just go home.' Then my youngest constantly said, 'you are so noisy, mama hui, you should be ashamed there are so many people', then I said, 'it's authentic, right'. [...] here (housing) there is no mall.

Lori/Mel: It's far away (smile).

In 2004, Ate Lorna's husband died. He became critically ill and needed surgery.⁵² However, the costs for his medication already drove them into debt. They were not able to pay for further treatment at the hospital and therefore decided to bring him back home to Bohol where he died surrounded by his family. After his death, Ate Lorna became the sole provider for the four children. She received a widow's pension. The pension together with the rental income from their house in Maharlika at least secured their livelihood. When the NGO started its programs in the squatter area, she became a member. The membership enabled her to receive a unit in the housing project and send her three youngest children to high school and college because the NGO paid for the school.

After having transferred to the housing project, the residents are asked to destroy their former dwellings in the squatter area in order to prevent further illegal dwelling. Nevertheless, Ate Lorna kept the house for three reasons:

- (1) as a source of income,
- (2) as a free place to stay for her sons who work in the city and can thus save money for transportation, but mainly

⁵² Sickness and death can put urban poor in severe financial difficulties as they lack the financial means to pay for medical treatment, not to speak of the costs for hospitalizations or surgeries. The NGO therefore works together with the organization *German Doctors*, who offer free medical treatment to the partner communities of the NGO in squatter areas and dumpsite settlements of Metro Cebu once a week and twice a month in the housing projects. Funeral ceremonies are also very expensive. For one of my research partners, the death of her parents-in-law, who died shortly after each other, caused their financial collapse. They went into debt and had to sell their house and scrap business. Finally, they ended up in the dumpsite settlement. Usually when someone dies, people collect donations from neighbors. In the case of Ate Lorna I learned, that she is a member in an organization in Bohol, who collect money from their members to support each other in case of the death of members. Every member pays PhP 3.00 per funeral or, when living in the city, a yearly amount. For Ate Lorna the membership is important insofar as she can be assured that her children will be financially supported in the case of her death.

(3) because of its high symbolic value:

Ate Lorna: [...] my house that was my husband's memento, even his bed. I didn't like to see my son taking it out because he wanted to make a new one. So I told him to put it back into the room... (smile).

The house there means a lot to me ... because it's the house of my husband. There, we lived together. It is because of his efforts and his work that we were able to build the house. It reminds me of his hard work, which made it possible to build a house. Therefore, I still care for the house. [After his death], the rent became an important source of income for us because [my children] were not yet working. Life would have been very difficult without it. The rent was just enough to live. [...].

I feel happy when I see the house, but it makes me sad when something is broken because I don't have the money to repair it. I always try to find money for repairs. I would be sad to see the house damaged. [...] but... for me I wouldn't like to live there anymore because I'm too afraid of fire, that is why I don't like to go back. But I still like my house there.

The life story of Ate Lorna provides insights for the motives of rural poor to move to the city. As became obvious, the income Ate Lorna and her husband earned by making mats and coconut wine was too little to provide for their livelihood. In the interview she recounted moments of extreme misery, like the following:

Ate Lorna: There were situations in Bohol, where we didn't have food to eat. I didn't have the courage to ask for help from my mother because I felt ashamed. One time I didn't even have one peso. We had no gas for light, no viand. I could not buy anything because I didn't even have one peso. I kept on crying not knowing how to continue. In the afternoon, I went outside to sweep, there was so much dirt, a lot of dried leaves from the jackfruit tree. Then all of a sudden I found a five-peso coin. It was hidden in the leaves. It made me cry. It was a miracle. God doesn't want us to live in darkness at night.

For Ate Lorna and her husband the city presented a chance to escape from their impoverished living conditions and to live self-dependently instead of being dependent on governmental support. Building their *own* house, first on a rented lot and afterwards (illegally) on government land, enabled them not only to keep dwelling expenses low but furthermore to have an extra income by renting out rooms in their house. Today, the rental income is still an important source of income for Ate Lorna as it ensures the payment of the monthly amortization of her unit in the housing project. Besides the financial aspect, the house in Maharlika is most of all a *memento* of her late husband: It keeps him alive in her memories as it embodies him and his achievements through migration. It was their *common home*, which provided and still provides shelter to family members, relatives and province mates who try their luck in the city.⁵³

⁵³ When Ate Lorna and her daughters moved to the housing project, her sons stayed in their house in the squatter area because they worked in the city, and transferring to the housing project would have entailed long commutes to work and higher expenses for transportation. Ate Lorna rented out the second floor, where they used to live, to

In terms of life in the squatter area, Ate Lorna's statements are similar to those of Ate Clara – particularly regarding the living conditions, the aesthetics and the negative psychological impacts. But Ate Lorna also pointed out positive features of squatter life arising from advantages coming along with an informal existence and the central location of squatter areas. As I noticed during my visit in the squatter area with Nikita, Maharlika has a well-developed infrastructure. There are numerous *sari-sari stores* within the neighborhood providing the residents with everything they need for the day or the moment. Located close to a main road, the settlement not only has access to free water from deep wells but also to tap water purchased by a neighbor with a water connection. Here, water is purchased in amounts ranging from a pitcher to a bucket. Ate Lorna also had proper access to electricity supply that she shared with her tenants. They even had a high-speed Internet connection provided by an antenna installed on their roof. Their computer, composed of free and second hand materials and a partly broken monitor, was an important appliance to facilitate researching for her children attending school. For Ate Lorna, Internet at home is a means of protection of her daughters because of being able to study at home instead of spending the evening hours in an Internet café.⁵⁴ Moreover, the settlement is located in walking distance to a shopping mall. Ate Lorna's comments show that going to a shopping mall was a welcome change in their everyday life. This is reflected in her statement: *We were also happy in the past*, expressing that their former way of life was not only depressing. Going to the shopping mall enabled them to enjoy the benefits of urban life for a short period of time without spending money, like strolling around in the *cool*, air-conditioned environment of the shopping mall where free food tastings and free entertainment programs are offered, like

a family from Bohol, with whom they were somehow related. Furthermore, a niece and a nephew of Ate Lorna's husband from Bohol moved in when they started studying in Cebu City. In the past, their house also offered shelter for relatives or the children of friends. Once, they accommodated a cousin's daughter who studied in Cebu and got pregnant. She did not want to tell her parents about it and needed help to be able to finish school. Thus, when the child was born, Ate Lorna took care of the child and the mother was able to finish school. Afterwards the mother and the child returned to her parents. Helping others and sharing even the little things is a trait of Ate Lorna's. Ate Lorna explained that, a couple of years later, they got back in touch with each other. At that time, her cousin's daughter already lived abroad and was married to a foreigner. She wanted to express again her gratitude to Ate Lorna and offered to send her money. This came just in the right moment, as Ate Lorna explained, because her youngest daughter had to pay the fees for taking an exam at college and they did not know how to bear the costs.

⁵⁴ Internet cafés are often considered to have a negative impact on children as parents cannot control their activities there. They worried that children with difficulties at school would rather spend their time there instead of going to school. During my fieldwork, a local organization offered to provide computers in order to install an Internet café in the housing project. There was a need for it, because the next two Internet cafés were located in the next *sitio* about 2km away from the housing project. Children would have to go there to do assignments on the Internet after school, which means that they would come home in the dark. There were a lot of discussions about the rules that needed to be implemented in the café in order to prevent misuse of the Internet and to protect children from Internet abuse. However, two days before Christmas, a teenage boy from the housing project was shot dead by rival gang members in an Internet café that was newly established in the dumpsite settlement along the street. Thus, the project was postponed as the parents were too afraid of not being able to control the activities of the users and of who could be attracted by the site.

fashion shows, or special events with local and international celebrities.⁵⁵ I highlight this aspect because it reveals the advantages of living a niche existence in the city. It enables urban poor to *participate in* and to also *enjoy the benefits of modern urban life*, which they otherwise could not afford. That is an aspect they first become aware of after having transferred to the housing project. The housing project is situated in the periphery of Metro Cebu. From there it takes about two to three rides by public transportation and about twenty to forty minutes to reach the next shopping mall. Furthermore, inside the housing project as well as in the close neighborhood there are only few entertainment and shopping opportunities. Thus, in retrospect, this seems to trigger a *sense of nostalgia* about the good times and the advantages of squatter life. Or as pointed out by Ate Lorna:

Ate Lorna: [Here] the market is really far. There you don't feel hungry because there are so many stores selling food. Here they are far away, then sometimes the Coop doesn't have things... There, there are a lot of stores. There you get cooked sweet potatoes everywhere. There are barbecues. You won't starve because even though you don't have money you just buy on credit and when you get your salary you pay. Here [in the housing project] even if you have money you starve. Because here you can't buy what you need, you have to go far... that's exhausting. [...] There it is much nicer because everything is close-by really, but what I was thinking of was about the house, I wouldn't be able to build a house like this... (all laughing) ... with lamella windows, made of concrete. I couldn't even afford to buy one kilo of cement (laughing). Life there is vivid and full of energy but your house is rather ugly. The only reason of living here [in the housing project] is to live in a nice house for my children.

This statement of Ate Lorna already reflects one of the major findings of this ethnography, namely that for the sake of a decent life, my research partners gave up the benefits of their former niche existence. Nevertheless, despite her nostalgic feelings for her past life in the squatter area, Ate Lorna also clearly points out that because of the dangerous living conditions she never wants to return. There is a further reason why the statement above is interesting for the present book, namely because it is a good example for the temporal orientation of experience as described by Throop (2011).

At the end of the interview, I also talked with Ate Lorna about her plans for the next ten years. For herself, she wants a healthy body to be able to still care for her children even although by that time they might be married. She points out that her eldest son will inherit the title for the unit because he is the only one of her children without a high-school degree. As degree holders, she considers her other children *better off*. I asked Ate Lorna about her opinion about her children's plans to work overseas.

⁵⁵ Ate Lorna did not mention these benefits but other interview partners who also lived in walking distance to a shopping mall.

Ate Lorna: It is ok if it is a good offer but if it isn't clear, I am scared about that, Mel. Maybe they won't be able to come home here because only the money of their work comes here. It's the only thing you see here. There the money is really big but we don't see each other every day. But if the offer is nice, it's ok! Because it's also for us. But if it's not clear they can also just stay here, we also can find money for everything here. But if it's nice there and their work is safe, but if not they better just stay here.

Her answer expresses an inner conflict between fear and approval, while the first predominated. Fear regarding the working conditions overseas: day after day, there is news about maltreated oversea workers, female and male alike. Furthermore, for her, *being-together with her children* is more important than the money they send home from overseas. On the other hand, she would also approve of their wish to work overseas given that the conditions are good, because the family would also benefit from it.⁵⁶

The story of Ate Lorna's life is a success story of rural-urban migration in the Philippines. Since her childhood, she has worked hard to improve her living conditions and those of her family. By living in a squatter area, she was able to provide for her family even after her husband's death. She obtained scholarship programs for her children so that they could go to school and to university. Furthermore, she became a beneficiary of the housing project and thus obtained a decent house. Through her efforts and that of her late husband, she created a basis for the improvement of her life and that of her children.

3.3 NANAY CORAZON – CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

Results from the interview conducted on November 8, 2011:

Nanay Corazon⁵⁷ is 50 years old. She is married and has two daughters at the age of 19 and 21. At the time of the interview, she worked at the Multi-Recycling-Facility as operator of a conveyor. There, she worked seven days a week from seven to seven. It was her first job after about twenty years of unemployment.⁵⁸ Her husband worked as a taxi driver in 24-hour shifts, with a

⁵⁶ In March 2012, her oldest daughter was hired for ten months to work on a German Cruise line and her second oldest son went to Saudi Arabia for two years to also work overseas. Thus, her children continue the pathway of their parents, but now beyond the Philippine border.

⁵⁷ I got to know Nanay Corazon in the first days of my stay in the housing project. She was very interested in my project, my origins and participated in a spontaneous 'German lecture', which I gave on a Saturday afternoon in front of the model house. She offered me to call her Nanay Corazon. Nanay is the title for 'mother' while 'Ate' is the title used when addressing an elder woman. She offered me her general support during my stay and thus wanted to comfort me in a situation when I was still new and all alone without any relatives or friends. However, due to her job, we only saw each other randomly. But nevertheless, from the beginning we felt sympathy for each other and thus felt somehow connected.

⁵⁸ In the MRF, employees work on a six-month basis. That means every six months the contracts expire if not renewed. Two weeks after the interview, Nanay Corazon was informed that her contract would not be renewed.

day off the day after. Her oldest daughter had just graduated in business administration and was newly hired by a credit institute in the city. The youngest daughter was just about to finish high school. Before they transferred to the housing project, they lived in Aroma, a squatter area in Mandaue City, for about ten years. There, she became a member of the NGO and an active leader in the *Basic Ecclesial Community*. On October 28, 2008 Nanay Corazon and her family transferred to the housing project with the first batch of beneficiaries.

In the following interview extract, she describes the living conditions in which she grew up in the province and her motives for moving back and forth between the province and the city.

Nanay Corazon: [I grew up] in the province, in Camotes Island [...] Our life in Camotes, my family is poor, I wouldn't say that we didn't have to eat, but the livelihood of my parents - my father was a carpenter, my mother only house wife, we are nine siblings, we were many. Our livelihood there was weeding, planting corn, cassava, sweet potato. That was our food back then. My elder sisters worked as maids here in Cebu. They supported us with money, [...] we the younger ones went to school because I liked going to school. My oldest brother went to school. My younger sibling went to school until high school. At the time [...] I was a working student [...] so that was my life in the past ... [...] The house of my parents was made of concrete, half concrete, half plywood and corrugated iron. It was big because we were so many. Our table was incredibly big because we were nine people who ate together. Our table was very long. [We had] four [rooms] for my mother, then for my siblings, the unmarried sisters and the boys on the other side. But when they were grown up, they went to work in Cebu. The ones who stayed became less, only the younger ones, but our house was big because we were so many. [...]. My father was a carpenter so he could do everything that needed to be done in the house. If he wouldn't have been a carpenter, he couldn't have built our house. He was very competent. Everything that needed to be done by a carpenter, he could do by himself. This was a great advantage for our family because we didn't have the money to pay someone to build our house. He had an eye for things that needed to be done. Therefore, our house was big [...] At that time when I was still little, I had no expectations; I only knew that we fetched water that came from the mountain put into pipes. It flows, Mel, the water, without any machine because there was no electricity at that time in our place, I think we got electricity when I was around 28, that was when we got electricity because when I was 29 I got married. That time we had electricity. Hui! It's a long time ago since electricity came to the Island. My elder siblings went fishing, that's what we ate because only sometimes we had money to buy fish. Most of the time my brothers went fishing, but they didn't sell it. What they caught was for our dish. Until we were grown up, when we were grown up we all lived in Cebu. Then we got married to a person from different places. I married a man from Asturias because I worked here in Cebu then, when I got married, at that time we both worked. I worked and he worked. When the contract finished, we started working for my cousin, I worked in her butcher store and my husband bought the pigs. She only rented the store. Then the contract expired and we couldn't continue the business because the owner reclaimed the store. So we went back to Camotes where we stayed for about two years. We went back to my father's

This was a big shock for her as she was optimistic that now after her daughter had graduated and found employment, they would be better off with their incomes and would thus be able to pay off the open balances for their house.

house that from the past because there was no one and it was still fine because it was stable. Thus also my children could live in the house my father built. Then my livelihood there, my husband worked here (Cebu), then I was left there and stayed there with the children, it was only me who took care of the children but I didn't farm, because I didn't stand it. In the past, I stand it when I was little, but now, since I'm grown up I don't stand it, it is very exhausting to farm because of the heat, the heat made me dull. Well, that was what caused my exhaustion ... Thus I just cared for the children, I put the focus on their education, I [sent] them to school. [...] There in the province, my husband wasn't very useful there because he is not used to weeding, [...] planting corn, sweet potato, cassava. Well, that was our food. But my husband wasn't skilled. So he went back to Cebu to work. When he arrived here in Cebu he told me: 'I'm not useful when you are not beside me, my family. That isn't what I want.' He didn't like that he was here without us so we decided that we will join him here [in Cebu]. He rented a dwelling in Aroma.

Nanay Corazon and her two children stayed in the parental home until the oldest daughter finished elementary. Then they followed her husband and went back to Cebu. At first, they lived together for a couple of months in a rented room. There, they experienced their first fire in the squatter area. Their dwelling burned down and they lost all their belongings except for the clothes they wore. After that, Nanay Corazon decided to buy a dwelling in the same place from an elderly couple that left the squatter area fearing the risk of another fire.

Nanay Corazon: Yes, we rented in Aroma, then it burned. We lived there maybe a little bit more than a month when our rented place burned down. It was a big fire in Aroma. The first fire; our rented place burned down as well as our belongings. Then our house there, Mel, really, water underneath, water, then you cannot sweep because there was so much plastic. It is like that, Mel, anything that is discarded, crap, feces of children who relieve themselves outside our place ... There were CRs for rent for a peso, big ones, but young children still did it outside [...] The posts of the house were made of wood and bamboo. That's it. Then it burned [...]. There were people who didn't want to live there anymore because they were afraid it could burn again. Thus, I bought their place. I paid 2000. I rebuilt it. I made a house out of it for us so that we didn't have to rent anymore because you always pay rent, so it was much better that I bought it for 2000 and then I myself made a house of it. [Before] our rent was 700; only very little. So I thought that when I buy their place, I make it a much bigger place [...], but well there was water underneath. So I said don't mind, at least we live in place without rent, we can save so we lived there for about six years because my child went there to high school and first and second year college. Our livelihood there, I didn't have work. So I participated in the meetings of [the NGO], wherever they offered seminars I went. I was the one active because I'm a member of the BEC in Aroma. [...] My husband was in charge of earning money. He worked for us but I didn't work so much because the fare for the school children was only little. They just walked to high school, and when she [oldest daughter] went to college it was only 20 pesos. It was not very expensive.

As the interview excerpt illustrates, Nanay Corazon experienced the living conditions under which she grew up as poor, insofar as their livelihood relied on their father's income as a carpenter and on self-providing agriculture. Her older female siblings financially supported the family by working as maids in the city. This is quite common in the Philippines. The oldest siblings are in charge of supporting the parents in securing the family's livelihood. Thus, they often lack educational degrees because they work to ensure the education of younger siblings. Nevertheless, she points out that her father's profession was an advantage especially regarding dwelling. She describes him as very skilled in contrast to her husband. His skills enabled them to live in a *big decent house* made of concrete, plywood and a corrugated iron roof with separated sleeping rooms. The materials and quality of the house proved to be durable so that Nanay Corazon and her family could still live there when she returned to the province because of unemployment. The house of her parents was abandoned. Her parents were already deceased and none of her eight siblings lived there anymore.

As it became apparent, rural-urban migration after childhood was common in her family. In her case, she wanted to obtain a higher educational degree in order to have better job opportunities in the city afterwards. In her statements, she touches on two aspects entailed with rural-urban migration:

- (1) A change of lifestyle from a self-sustaining livelihood based on production to a lifestyle based on paid labor and consumption, and
- (2) marrying outside one's origin group. For the present ethnography, this change of lifestyle – from production to consumption – is of major interest, as it is perceived as an easier and more comfortable way of life.

This becomes evident in the statement of Nanay Corazon when she speaks about her life after returning to her parents' house:

Nanay Corazon: In the past, when I was young, I stand it [farming], but now, since I am grown up I don't stand it, it is very exhausting to farm because of the heat, the heat made me dull, well that was what caused my exhaustion... thus I just cared for the children, I put the focus on their education.

Here, Nanay Corazon mainly refers to the physically demanding aspect of farming.⁵⁹ However, there are further aspects included which she did not address in the interview, but which are commonly linked to life in the province. It is commonly described with the Cebuano terms

⁵⁹ Besides the physically demanding work involved in farming, there is another aspect that is viewed negatively about this kind of lifestyle. Income is bound to and depends on the harvest and thus money is only periodically available and uncertain. Therefore, wage labor or informal income generating activities are favored as they are less uncertain and regularly available varying from twice a month to daily.

bukit, daghang kahoy and *mingaw*, meaning that the province is often a ‘mountainous terrain’ with ‘lots of trees’¹, where there is ‘not much to do’. *Mingaw* is a central term commonly used to express an atmosphere characterized by silence, lack of entertainment and loneliness, as well as for remote locations. In this context the term has a rather negative connotation, which becomes evident by its antonym *lingaw*. *Lingaw* is rather positively connoted describing a joyful, exciting and entertaining atmosphere filled with sounds. It is commonly associated with life in the city (cf. Chapter 4.3.3).

In Nanay Corazon’s statements another aspect of rural-urban migration becomes evident. Rural-urban migration is not only a one-way road but practiced in reciprocating movements. Beside the explanations by Nanay Corazon, I also learned from other interview partners that for a certain time they returned to their home place in the province because of unemployment. Other reasons for returning are, among others, difficult living conditions. This is mainly the case for migrants with little children. It is a common practice that either the mother moves back with young children, while the husband stays in the city in order to earn money. Or children in their early childhood are left in the province to live with grandparents and relatives to protect them from the extremely difficult and life threatening living conditions in the squatter areas.

In the second excerpt, Nanay Corazon describes their dwelling and the environmental conditions of the squatter area where they used to live before they transferred to the housing project. These are similar to those of Ate Clara and Ate Lorna, who point out the devastating hygienic and sanitary conditions and the constant threat of fire, of which they had once already been victims. Despite all these negative aspects, from the perspective of Nanay Corazon, moving to the squatter area enabled her to build her own house – although illegally – instead of renting, and thus to keep their living expenses low. For Nanay Corazon, saving money is important not only to ensure their existence, but more importantly to ensure that her children get a good education and thereby the prospect of a *better future*, not only for her children but also for herself. In the interview extract, she also points out the importance of being a member of the organization.⁶⁰ The activities of the organization and her position as chairwoman positively shaped her everyday life in the squatter area and granted her access to scholarship programs for her children, as well as to leader trainings and activities offered by the organization, and, finally, access to a unit in the housing project. In her statement about her active membership, an interesting

⁶⁰ She points out that at the time when they used to live in the squatter area, she did not work and thus had time to be an active leader. This statement has to be considered in the context of her situation at the time of the interview. As pointed out in the introduction, she was fully employed in the MRF. Her employment made it impossible to be still active in the community. Thus, because of her absence she became a so-called Member Not In Good Standing (NIGS), but for valid reasons (cf. chapter 4.2.1).

aspect is implied pointing to a connection between active membership and squatter life on the one hand and – as it will become more apparent in the following interview excerpt – their new life in the housing project on the other. In the squatter area, they were able to keep living expenses low. At that time Nanay Corazon's husband mostly provided for the family alone and she had time to participate and engage in membership activities. This, however, changed in the housing project where the living expenses are higher. This aspect will be the topic of the following interview extract.

Mel: How do you feel about the way you live now?

Nanay Corazon: Happy, because we have a house, our life is comfortable, not like our life before. Our life was difficult - our CR ... there was none - but there we wouldn't say that we rented a house because we didn't pay rent there. We just dwelled there because it was a squatter although we could be evicted at any time. We kept on living there until whenever. Then here, our life is good. Our roof doesn't leak; the walls are good; then the place is good, it's not muddy. There's no water underneath. That's the difference to our place before. Here our life improved, the only disadvantage is that we pay rent, 700 every month. Thus, if sometimes really because of not enough time it's like ... with me, I have delays for the house here, Mel. I have remaining balances for my house because of my student. My child graduates [from University], (whew), a lot of requests for money. Therefore, I can't really meet the obligations for my house. I promised to Maam Emma ... what shall be my priority. It's very difficult for me. Celia is graduating; a lot of money is requested; thousands, thousands, every move of her costs thousands. Then until she graduates on the 15th it costs money. Thus I promised Maam Emma ... pleading for my house that I don't have ... at the moment, everything I have ... my child needs for the graduation. Then in the future, she will help us when she is working; she will pay for the house in the near future. I'm confused what should be my priority: the house, the sponsorship of [the NGO] for Celia [...] because she was sponsored by [the NGO] ... so where shall I go? My student first, right Mel? The student first because when she graduates then in the future she will work. It's like with me now, I have a good job, so step by step (slowly) I pay off the house, my remaining balance. It's fine for her [Maam Emma] because my reason is acceptable. I have a valid reason. It is not because I say that I don't pay for the house, Maam, because I have to buy rice. I don't say that. It is because of my student. Then you cannot say that your student is not the number one because you pay for the school and there are further payments besides the tuition fee. [The NGO] pays it, [...], but the costs for her transportation is 150 per day, then the costs for her graduation, she almost failed because of the many requirements. They go into thousands, 1400, some are 2800, there are so many field trips. [The salary at the MRF] is 327 per day, then minus 150, [...] that is the fare for my child, 150, so you have to deduct it right away, right?

Mel: So now your child is working, right, so does she now help you out?

Nanay Corazon: She also helps, Mel, but, how to say, regarding her effort to help ... 'Inday, you put money aside', I don't say that. From her income we took one after she received her fourth payment. We only took one because for now her income ... she has her own personal needs like for example she bought a cell phone because her cell phone before was different, pathetic, because she was only a student. So now she is in an office, thus she bought a very expensive small cell phone

because so that she is not 'behind' her colleagues, because you also feel pity for your child. Then she bought new shoes, she had a lot of shortcomings, Mel, because she went to school so I could not support her so much, I could not provide her with what she needed, I just told her 'Day, just make sure you finish school so that you can later survive. You always say 'Ma, I need shoes' like that, but you have to put up with it, Day, so that you will succeed'. So, when she started working, she bought, poor her, clothes for her uniform, she could not just wear ... for her uniform. She only let sew one uniform because this December they changed the uniform so she only let sew one because otherwise, what a waste, because she was there for only three months and they changed the uniforms and she paid for it. So she waited until December. She cannot just wear jeans, blouse and skirts. When she does not work at the bank, she cannot wear them so she bought some, that's the reasons why I don't ... her salary. I don't demand 'give me your salary, day' because of her personal needs. So I just ask her for favors; because if she does not use it for herself, she will be behind her colleagues; because her colleagues, they are not students, they rather seem to be professionals, so I just give her a chance. But she plans to get electricity before Christmas arrives. But what do we do if not, we just light candles on Christmas. That's ok, no problem.

Mel: Do you miss something from the place where you lived before?

Nanay Corazon: In Aroma, I miss my friends from there, our activities there, we were active members of [the NGO] there because if we were not active we could not have arrived here, thus, I was the chairperson there in Aroma. I miss the people there, our friends [...] I miss the place because it seemed I felt comfortable there because we were complete. There was electricity, there was water from our well, but you didn't have to pay for everything.

Mel: What would you like to achieve within the next ten years? For you and for your children?

Nanay Corazon: That my child will succeed in school and find work afterwards. That they have a comfortable life in the future, that they can financially care for their family, for example, that they are married, that's it, that they are comfortable in their marriage, that it won't be difficult like it was for us, I don't want them to follow in my footsteps. Well, that's what I strive for. [...] And for me, too, that my body is fine, that God will give me vigor, then that I will still have a job, that I can get electricity, water, right?

These final statements reflect that Nanay Corazon is also ambivalent about the changes triggered by moving to the housing project. These mainly turn around the financial challenges involved in dwelling in the housing project. Since they moved, they face higher living expenses and financial obligations, like the monthly amortization payment, costs involved in water and electricity supply, and transportation due to the remote location of the housing project. These add to the extra costs involved in the graduation of her oldest daughter, which are not covered by the sponsorship program of the NGO. In the interview she explained that because of the higher expenses she has open balances for the house. She justifies this with her decision to prioritize her children's education as an investment in their future, which in the long run will

enable them to meet their financial obligations in the housing project. Although this is considered a valid reason for payment delays, it brings along consequences for their dwelling practices. As mentioned by Nanay Corazon, they have no electricity connection. This is not only due to their financial difficulties but also to the communal policies preventing them from either applying for an electricity connection or purchasing electricity through joint connections. Nanay Corazon's perspective has to be seen against the background of how she used to purchase electricity in the squatter area. This will be one of the main topics in chapter five.

It is through Nanay Corazon that I became aware of the significance of electricity not only for her, but for all the residents without access to electricity supply. As discussed in detail in chapter 5.3., living in the housing project without access to electricity has a major impact on the residents' *sense of comfort* in their new house and thus on their *sense of satisfaction* about the performed change of lifestyle. This is especially the case for those who now do not have electricity but had electricity in their former houses and hence became habituated to the use of electric appliances, especially rice cooker, electric fan, TV set, sound systems and most importantly electric light. The absence of electricity triggers negative effects on my research partners' sense of comfort on the one hand, and on the other hand it makes social differences between residents perceivable. Therefore, I argue that in the housing project, electricity consumption becomes an aesthetic fact, which is socially effective - to what extent/in what way, I will outline in chapter 5.3. Again, it becomes apparent that the location and infrastructure of squatter areas offer urban poor certain advantages, from which they are otherwise excluded due to lacking financial means. Nevertheless, even though it enables them to keep living expenditures low, the uncertain future prospects and the non-monetary price they pay with regard to their health condition and safety, are huge. Finally, these reasons are the crucial factors for moving to the housing project. Yet, the different living conditions of the housing project, which my research partners experience as challenging and like a step back, shed a rather positive light on the former living conditions of the squatter areas and – as already carved out in the interview with Ate Lorna – create a sense of nostalgia in retrospect.

3.4 KUYA KENT – *THE TASTE OF OUR PAST DIFFICULTIES*

Results from the interview conducted on November 15th, 2011:

Kuya Kent is 60 years old, married and has five children – two boys and three girls aged 10, 17, 24, 25, and 27. Like Nanay Corazon, he transferred to the housing project on October 28, 2008. In the housing project, he works for the recycling livelihood program as a garbage collector whenever there is an order. Besides that, he is part of the community guards, called *tanud*,

who watch the entrance gate every night. Kuya Kent grew up in Mandaue City where he lived first with his parents and siblings and afterwards with his own family in different squatter areas. He is the second eldest of nine children. In grade four, he stopped attending school in order to support his family through scavenging activities and selling cigarettes – so that his younger siblings could go to school.

Kuya Kent: My father was a carpenter. He worked a lot. So I just helped my mother. I didn't go to school. I purchased cigarettes, sold them; then I scavenged, well, that's what I did until I grew up. I worked. My school grade is only elementary. I didn't go to school in order to support my mother, so I scavenged to buy food/rice. Well, that's the story of my past. Until I turned fifteen I worked. From the age of twenty I worked for a company for about twenty years.

Mel: Where did you scavenge?

Kuya Kent: There in Mandaue in the streets picking in barrels. I got cans, carton. Then, when I stopped scavenging I drove traysikat, then sometimes I helped my mother doing the laundry, fetching water, [...]. It would have been very difficult, if I had not helped. Thus, I just didn't go to school because there was no other support, because my eldest sister was there in Manila. She worked as maid. Then I was the oldest at home. I helped my mother, that's it. I just didn't go to school because we didn't have food when Dad had no work, [...] well, that's my life in the past. [...].

Mel: How many times in your life did you move?

Kuya Kent: Four times [...]. Our house in Mandaue we rented, in Cambarro we rented, then in Superior ... we also rented in Looc. In Mandaue Tulay we built our own. In Basak we also just made our own dwelling, as before a small dwelling, only temporary. Then the fifth time it's ours. [...] It was only a small dwelling, very small, only a shed. [...] I lived with them [parents] until I married. Then when Pirot [oldest daughter] was born, I made another so there in Looc Superiour. When it finished there ... Cambarro; we were demolished in Tulay [...] after the demolition [...] we moved here to Basak Lapu-Lapu; afterwards here to the housing. I worked as a traysikat driver, that was my livelihood. I bought rice afterwards. When Pirot graduated from high school she worked for a company and provided for our life because I only worked from time to time as 'standby'. Then, when Pirot got married, it was Rachel [second oldest daughter] who cared for us until today when I don't have work; and when I have work I also contribute to our food if there is something; and if Rachel is not there it's our neighbors. [...] in Tulay [...], where I rented there was electricity, in Superior Looc no, small lamp. [...] water we bought, five per container. Our problem there in Tulay was water, that was our only problem. When I traveled with the traysikat there was food [...] our dwelling, home was small, then when we ... to Basak. We just built something there, it was like before but there was water. But our food/meals were very difficult because it was only Rachel who provided for it, we relied on her income in Basak. It first was an advantage here (Jasper) because we sometimes have work here. Here, it is not so very difficult, it is an advantage compared to there in Mandaue. It seems as if we improved a little bit here because we have always food here; I have work, too, as garbage collector, [...], we can sometimes ... even when it's only little.

Mel: The places where you lived in the past were all squatter areas? Why did you decide to move there?

Kuya Kent: They were all squatters. Because we were evicted, because the land on which we built our house, because they wanted to use it, the landowner reclaimed it, sold it, then we were evicted. So we moved to Tulay, too. When we arrived in Tulay two years later we were demolished because the land was also sold by the mayor, so we were here in Basak, here in Lapu-Lapu, our land where we lived we rented as before, when it was finished here we moved, it was Father Heinz who helped us here, we were very happy about Father Heinz that we can live here, we are very thankful to him.

Lori: Who decided to which place you move, Kuya? Did you have relatives there?

Kuya Kent: No, it was Father M. who transferred us there, that land on which we set up, it was Father M. and his comrades who paid for it. In Basak, Father M. said that when we arrive in the housing it is all over so we went there to Basak. We lived there for about three years, then the first year we rented there but from the second year on we didn't because it was not their land. They were only employees. Then there was a case that was not yet closed, thus we didn't pay the rent there anymore because there were two landowners. Hence, to whom should we pay rent to? So that's why we didn't rent any longer, for about two years. When it was ready here [housing project] we moved here, Melody, and the others. We were a lot there in Basak. We lived there, Oki and so on there in Basak, we were a group there. When it was ready here, we came here. [...]

In contrast to Ate Clara, Ate Lorna and Nanay Corazon, Kuya Kent grew up in a squatter area in Metro Cebu and never left the city. His path reveals the challenges of informal settlers arising from the illegal status of dwelling in a certain place. Kuya Kent and his family have been driven from one place to another in order to give way to development measures in the city. He experienced different forms of impoverished living conditions ranging from renting a place made of light materials to squatting on a sidewalk in a shelter made of carton and tarpaulin after being demolished. The last demolition he experienced in Tulay is part of a shared history of seven families who transferred to the housing project together with the first batch of *awardees*. Supported by several organizations, the informal settlers negotiated with the mayor who owned the land in order to be accepted as permanent settlers. However, they lost the negotiations because they lacked the financial means to buy the lot from the government. Bella, my assistant, also lived there. She was one of the negotiation leaders. The demolition was announced for the December 29, 2006. The settlers did not simply abandon their homes. Some of them had already lived there for more than twenty years. Bella for example grew up in that place. There, she met her husband and their two children were born there. Therefore, the settlers prepared to defend their homes. The women formed a front row at the only entrance of the area hoping to discourage the demolition team from carrying out their order. The men waited in the back. Bella told me that by placing the women in front, they tried to prevent the men from fighting and hoped to get a chance for peaceful negotiations. However, the demolition team unexpectedly arrived from a private lot at the back of the area where the men were waiting. Thus, they were the first

to encounter the demolition team equipped with heavy machinery and accompanied by the police. The men threw stones to defend their homes but were chased away. The settlers did not even have enough time to get their personal belongings out of their houses before they were bulldozed. At the end of the demolition, about eighty families were left without any belongings, three men were arrested by the police and one man died on the spot of a heart attack. Afterwards, the area was cleared and the debris transported to the next dumpsite where the settlers went to look for their lost belongings.⁶¹ Each family received a compensation payment of 3000 pesos and the mayor promised them a relocation site that still does not exist. Thus, for the first nights, the settlers built temporary shelters by the roadside made of discarded materials like cardboard, wood and tarpaulin. But these were demolished again. Then they were allowed to squat for two months on a church ground. After that, the organization suggested that they settle on a private lot outside Lapu-Lapu City and stay there until the housing project is finished and can accommodate the first families. Only half of the affected families followed the organization's offer. From their perspectives, it was located too far away from their workplaces.

Kuya Kent described the living conditions in the last squatter area, from where he finally transferred to the housing project, as very poor and worse than what he had experienced before. Thus, when they finally moved to the housing project almost two years after the demolition in Tulay, he experienced an extensive change in his life.

Mel: Can you describe your life in [the housing project]?

Kuya Kent: We are happy that we could move here, very happy. It was only here that we 'tasted' (natilawan) our difficulties in the past. Our life here is comfortable, our sleeping ground is comfortable. Our house has no holes in the wall. Because there in Basak, our walls had holes. Here we are comfortable, we are thankful to God that we live here. [...].

Mel: Have your feelings about life here changed since you moved, why?

Kuya Kent: It has changed, because my feeling (well-being) here is different compared with there. There, I was constantly sad because of our impoverished condition (kahimtang). Here, I am not sad, here my ... is I'm happy, because sometimes I can work here. There in Basak no. [...] The biggest difference here is regarding the way we live because there we don't have work, here we have work, we have a livelihood [...].

Mel: What would you like to achieve within the next ten years? For you and for your children?

Kuya Kent: I think of my body, that I still live, that my body is well, about my children that their bodies are fine, that they are in a good state [...] that Gerald finishes

⁶¹ In this context, I learned that for urban poor a demolition entails loss on the one side and benefit on the other side. While the victims of the demolition lose their belongings, the scavengers find hidden treasures in the debris. Victims from this demolition thus complained that it were the scavengers who afterwards took their belongings, which they tried to get back.

school, that Rachel still has her job, that Marie is good at school. [...] I will be still working hard for something good, praying for having a good body, and that St. Arnold will give me the age of eighty.

Mel: What do you think: Will your children go abroad to work? Would you like that?

Kuya Kent: We would be happy and sad [...] because we would not see each other, but also happy because our needs for the house would be solved. [...] We just pray to God that their work abroad will be good. It would make us happy when our children solve the problem of our home, that is what I say about it.

The story of Kuya Kent is, on the one hand, a good example for the *downward spiral* urban poor easily get into and which he was only able to escape through the support of the organization. On the other hand, it also reveals that on the level of lifestyle, the transformations triggered by the relocation vary from extreme to low impact. They are extreme with regard to the quality and condition of the house, its infrastructure and the living environment. Regarding livelihood and securing their existence, however, the changes are less intense. As Kuya Kent points out, he works whenever there is an offer, which is more regular compared with what he was used to before. Otherwise, he and his wife rely on the financial support of their unmarried and working children. Thus, he continues the cultural pattern of relying on the support of the eldest children, as his parents depended on him in his childhood. The difference, however, is that his eldest daughters have at least a high-school degree and his youngest daughter still attends school while his sons both did not finish school. His youngest son rather follows in his footsteps, insofar as he once in a while works as a *traysikul* driver in the neighborhood of the housing project. Compared with the previous interviews, the interview with Kuya Kent was far shorter because he described his life and his experiences with less detail than most of my female interview partners. Nevertheless, his description of how he experienced the transition from one living environment (the squatter area in Basak) to another (the housing project) reveals an interesting aspect: namely, that he first became aware of the precariousness of their former living conditions when he moved to the housing project. One particularly interesting detail for this ethnography is the way Kuya Kent expressed his experience, using the Cebuano term *natilawan* meaning ‘taste’. Another interview partner also used this term to express the difficulties arising out of the experiences of living without electric light: They were already *used to its taste*. From my point of view, it reveals the strong involvement of sensory or even aesthetic experiences in the transition process. I will return to this point in chapter 5.3.

3.5 ATE JANIS – *THE AGENCY OF DIRT*

Results from the interview conducted on December 8, 2011:

Ate Janis is 39 years old and mother of nine children aged between 9 months and 21 years. She grew up on a farm in the province of Mindanao. She only finished elementary and stopped attending school afterwards in order to support her parents working on the farm.

Ate Janis: I grew up in the province. I am the firstborn [we are eleven children]. So I supported my parents. It is very difficult to be the eldest, that's how it is in the province. [...] In my mind was only the idea of helping my parents in our difficult life situation because it is very difficult when your origin is poor, it seems you don't have time for going to school. [...] Earning money there is also different compared to the city because making money there is difficult. For example, every day you work, weeding, in the past every day you only got thirty [pesos] in the province. Then, because on Sundays there is market day there in the province. [...] you don't have money so you catch an animal and sell it at the market. Of what you earn you then buy dried fish, fermented fish, then rice. When you don't have rice again, you sell your animal, one looks for money. Yes, that's how it is in the province, then if you can sell corn you sell a little bit of it to buy fish, commonly you exchange it in order to eat fish, that's how it is. [...].

Ate Janis's husband grew up on a neighboring farm where they first lived together after their marriage. When their fourth child was born, her father-in-law suggested that they move to the northern province of Cebu in order to claim a piece of family owned farmland. Moving to Cebu offered them the opportunity to own a piece of land and pursue their accustomed lifestyle. However, when they arrived in Cebu – fifteen years ago – things turned out differently:

Ate Janis: Thus we went to Cebu, suz! Now, when we arrived there the soil was not the same, really, he [her husband] really tried to plant. He was the one who carried all the stones away. Then he saw the soil in which he wanted to plant corn. I cried, I went [...] to Mandaue and looked for work because otherwise we could not care for the children – very pitiful – then what we brought with us was only one sack of rice so when it was consumed there was nothing more. I went here to the city and looked for work and they stayed there. Our children were still very small.

Making a living of farming in the northern province of Cebu proved to be more difficult than expected. That is why Ate Janis decided to move to Cebu City and look for a job to support her family financially. She worked as a housekeeper and left her children with her husband in the province. A few months later, her husband followed her and gave up farming. They first moved to Umapad where they rented a small room. Her husband found a job in a rattan manufacturing company. However, after three months the company closed. Thus, they were again faced with the need to find a new livelihood to feed the family. Their eldest son made a proposal to solve their problems:

Ate Janis: [...] he came and said to his dad 'tomorrow we will go to the dumpsite' and his father asked 'why?' 'Because there you can make quick money, really. Afterwards we will buy rice!' Yes, that's what he said. [...] My child taught him what can be sold and thus what to look for. Suz! Mercy was with them: in the afternoon they made about 200 [pesos] so my husband didn't look for another job. Instead he went scavenging. He said it is ok to go scavenging because our food is sure, we can buy rice. Then in the past for food we used what came from the freezer and was just dumped. We ate it. We didn't need to buy. Yes, what we cooked we just ... like that. Me too, on Saturdays and Sundays I accompanied them and went there, [...] my child was crazy of scavenging, really, he didn't go to school, that was a problem for me because he always accompanied his father every day, I told him that it is useless, 'you go to school, it is only us', ay, so it was me who convinced him to go to school. So Saturdays and Sundays we spent on the dumpsite that's the only ... he scavenged, he left us alone from Monday to Friday to go to school because what when he is always absent. That's how it was, so my husband didn't think of looking for work he just kept on scavenging. 'God had mercy with us', he said, 'garbage is real, dirty, that's right, but we can live, it is not fake, just don't be disgusted of it because you get everything from the dumpsite, you can find a lot of nice things, utilities the rich discarded, but you can still use them, you only have to clean them'.

Despite the poor living conditions, they left their rented place and moved to the dumpsite. The dumpsite provided everything they needed: income-generating resources, a free place to dwell, free construction materials, free food and much more:

Ate Janis: We only built very small [...]. The roof he covered with tarpaulin because there was a lot of discarded tarpaulin. Then he saw a lot of discarded plywood which he also made use of. When he was done, we moved to the dumpsite and didn't rent anymore. [Life there] is very pitiful because when it rains it's always muddy. Yes and then imagine the children going to school. We always brought them to the gate where it is not muddy anymore. [...] Then there is constantly smoke, there is so much smoke, very pitiful. When there is smoke, Halla! You just take your children and run to a place where is no smoke. You keep on running to where is no smoke. You bring your children there. Then there are already many standing around because wind drives the smoke towards your house. It's so pitiful. Then it stinks because of the bronze. Now the situation is better because burning is now prohibited, because before even though your house is here, people would just burn bronze, carelessly. Therefore it is now much better, now there is discipline because before there wasn't. [...].

Mel: What can you find there?

Janis: Sometimes jewelry, sometimes there is also money. [...] there are like 100, others find a lot, like thousands [...]. We were still new scavengers, maybe only one year [...] my husband found money only a little bit about 21 thousand [...] it seems, as if they should have been deposited at the bank. I don't know why someone threw them away, because they were in a carton for garbage! In a big carton for a TV and a lot of crumpled-up paper. When the others dumped it on the truck my husband got it because he specialized on carton for sideline. That's what we buy rice with because he sells it every afternoon. That's with what we buy rice, dinner and breakfast and so on. He took the carton, put it to the side and kept on digging. Then his mood gave up and then there was still the carton [...] he saw that there was only some/a little paper inside, certainly it came from an office [...] the money was rolled

inside when he took it. It seemed as if it moved ... so the money was rolled in plastic. There was also the deposit slip inside, at first he thought it's only play money. Children were playing close by and saw him, so he quickly put it inside his pocket because there were so many people and they started asking 'what's going on? Whose is it?' They came over to him. The children were playing 'money, money' like that. Then he called me because I was there opposite the truck that was in the process of dumping! I was there opposite of him also digging. He called me, 'come on over here, quickly', I asked him 'what's going on?' He said, 'quick help me to carry my garbage, because we go back there to our shed because we will have a snack.' I said, 'you just had breakfast, now you want to have a snack, let's go home later', he said 'come quick I'm very hungry', so I got my sack. [...] he is laughing all the time in the back. In our shack he still was laughing so he said 'let's have a snack now'. I asked him, 'what's our snack' [...], then he said, 'no, come on over here, quick, I have to show you something real', so he gave me something to sit on there on our garbage and he said: 'look what I found.' 'Yes', I said, 'wow, how much is it?', He said 'for sure it comes from the Tipolo truck, come over here and look, help me to count how much it is'. Suz! I became nervous, I said 'nah! How silly you are, you will be arrested. Here will be someone looking for it!' He said, 'a lot of people saw me there, think of the money for the children'. [...].

Mel: What did you do with the money, Ate?

Ate Janis: We bought a TV.

Mel: Your neighbors, didn't they ask you why you bought a TV?

Ate Janis: No, because they know that you found money or sometimes you find jewelry.

Mel: Did you share it or not?

Ate Janis: Yes, we shared, [...] my husband gave it away because so many gathered together, halla! They all came together, halla! My husband bought soft drinks, a lot of bread. People came and asked for cigarettes, asked for tanduay, yes, we shared because when you find something you give and what was left we kept for us [...].

Mel: Didn't you think... now we leave, or not?

Ate Janis: No, we didn't. It seems as if your mind is just there [...]. Whoever is there thinks about demolition. We lived in a place where our habitation ... there in Umapad ... we didn't trust in that place, we didn't have expectations because the land owner, ... the guard is very strict, but [the NGO] negotiated with them and they accepted, so the hapless scavengers still live there, but we didn't expect to live on that land because the owner is very strict and now the owner has not been seen. [...] ay... very strict, it seems that Benedicto is a rich Chinese, it seems as if all the descendants of the Benedicto family live outside of this land, no one ever followed up after they gave it to the poor, really, we are happy, really, we came from there from the dumpsite and then they gave it because it is so very pitiful. Well, that's what I think because if we are later evicted where shall we go, well that was my question. God has mercy with us that we arrived there, and also that we arrived here in Jasper. We never thought of once having a house here in the years that passed by, in which we lived on the dumpsite. Very pitiful conditions, extremely pitiful living conditions there in the dumpsite.

Mel: What is 'pitiful' for you?

Ate Janis: Very pitiful because when you have suddenly visitors and they come to your place and then your house is there on the dumpsite close to many flies, then it

seems to be very dirty, pitiful and miserable. When one goes outside, when you go to Mandaue, it seems you don't feel comfortable passing by others because although in your mind you know you washed yourself. Your mind tells you 'look at yourself, you seem to be still dirty' because of the smoke there and then your utilities are dusty. That's it when you go outside you still seem to be dirty. When the people see you [...] dirty, it seems your character is also dirty, whatever you wear it's still dirty even though you washed it. That's really, really bitter! Well that's why I thought if there is a place to live, I don't care if it is small, at least it is far, far away from that dumpsite. Well, that's what happened. We just prayed to God and [the NGO] helped us. But the others, I don't know what they do. It seems as if they have no plan, because I have many children, so I'm very, very thankful [...] that I arrived here. Because I feel pity for my children, really how to say ... I pity my children very much for that they grew up there. Well, I still feel a lot of pity for them.

Mel: What do you think: Is life in the squatter area the same like on the dumpsite?

Ate Janis: It seems to be similar but it is different on the dumpsite. On the dumpsite the people leave in the morning, they are not in their houses because they are all there and the children go to school. You just think of digging until the afternoon, keep on digging until the afternoon. When you arrive at home, you do the cooking [...] the washing, well that's what is on your mind. You don't think about 'what do I need to buy' or 'I will stroll around the mall' like that. That might be the difference or, when you have no work to do, you think of strolling around ..., there when you have nothing to do you go digging because ... That is the difference for me, when you have nothing else to do you just go digging [...] you just think of going there, and here I think ... I will go ... because I have something to buy, like that...

Mel: But how is the situation now? Is it like in the past, because in the meantime they have introduced waste separation⁶², right?

Ate Janis: Yes, it's different, it's not like before, difficult, because of the waste separation what you collect is only very little.

Mel: Why did you decide to apply for the housing and not to continue living there in Umapad?

Ate Janis: I thought of maybe the owner of the land will also demolish us. It drove us crazy to think about where we would go then. That's it [...] thus I just explained to my husband 'let's just ... the housing because God beware, God beware we would all be evicted because who owns the land, what if they want to make a mall, where would we go?'

Through the conversation with Ate Janis, I learned that life in a dumpsite settlement is different from life in a squatter area. The dumpsite settlements form a rather self-contained community with only little contact to the *outside world*. This is a difference compared to squatter areas, centrally located in urban niches. Squatter area dwellers interact and participate far more in city life, e.g. through employment or informal income generating activities like street vending, etc. For dumpsite settlers it seems to be mainly the public schools where children get in contact

⁶² In March 2011, Cebu City finally passed a garbage policy obliging private households to separate their waste. The policy was made public with the slogan 'No separation. No selection'. The implementation of waste separation had severe consequences for the scavengers. Dumpsites were closed and Material-Recycling-Facilities were established. Even though the dumpsite in Umapad kept operating, only a fraction of recyclable materials reached the dumpsite. Thus, the scavengers experienced major financial losses, and existing on the dumpsite became even more insecure.

with the outside world and with different way of lives. Thus, for children of scavengers, attending school means a chance to take another path than their parents. This, however, is very difficult, as it should become evident through Ate Janis's description about the entanglement of scavengers and the *lifeworld* of the dumpsite. As pointed out by Ate Janis, life on and of the dumpsite had a major impact on her identity. She identified herself with the characteristics of the dumpsite area: being dirty. It did not only affect her self-esteem, but also the way she suspects that others perceive her. Furthermore, the dumpsite is the main focus of their entire existence. It offers means of income, free access to a place to dwell, free dwelling materials and a broad range of utilities, food, money, and other 'treasures'. As pointed out by Ate Janis's husband, "*garbage is real, dirty, that's right, but we can live, it is not fake, just don't be disgusted of it*". Thus, from the perspective of scavengers, leading a life on and of the dumpsite seems to be a last chance to live a self-determined life in the city and to enjoy access to a range of different material resources. This is especially the case after forced eviction or destruction caused by fire.⁶³ However, the living and working conditions are devastating, bringing along severe consequences for the scavengers' health.

On April 8, 2011 Ate Janis and her family transferred to the housing project. Their decision to leave the dumpsite and to transfer to the housing project had major impacts on Ate Janis and her family's life, as she points out in the following:

Mel: How do you feel about the way you live now?

Ate Janis: It seems lighter, that is my feeling, it seems my family is safe now, my children seem to be different now, you don't see them make-up themselves with coal all the time, then their clothing is not dirty anymore all the time, suz! Everything is so tiring there. Although you are constantly changing their clothes you don't see them clean because of the dirty surrounding. Really, there are so many bonfires, then you walk around there and the smell lingers on your body. Here, even though they go out in the morning and I do not wash them in the evening - they just go to bed straightaway, when you see them the other morning they are still clean. There, it is not the same. [...] Here, it's safe from diseases, their bodies seemed to be different in the past. That's what I observed [...].

Mel: What would you like to achieve within the next ten years? For you and for your children?

Ate Janis: The plan for my children in the future is when I am old, that their lives are less difficult when they one after another have families. Then, whatever I can do to help them, I will do. Because I don't want to be for them ... because I will be old [...]. I will be for sure just sitting because of being old [...]. I guess the house there [dumpsite] will no longer be there. But here it will be because here it's safe

⁶³ In November 2011, a fire destroyed a whole squatter area not far away of the dumpsite of Umapad. That day, I visited the settlement. Even from the distance we could see an immense cloud of smoke spreading over the area. As the settlement was situated in a three-meter-easement zone of a river, the former settlers were denied to return to the place. Instead, they were offered a relocation site by the government. However, as I learned on my next visit in the dumpsite settlement, a range of newcomers had arrived on the dumpsite.

compared to there. I guess my house there will be broken by that time, it will no longer be there because I won't sell it. I will take care that it won't break because [...] I think I wouldn't like it because that's where I come from. So I won't sell it because afterwards there is no place to stay, because you remember that when you go to Umapad there is my house, ay... It would hurt a lot in my chest. [...] I miss my house there in Umapad. Once a week I go there for a visit, maybe it is because it was our home for such a long time. I guess that's why you miss it. I say that even if it is what it is, it is a real house, but I just like to go home there. I just make sure that I come home here afterwards. [...] My plan for my house in Umapad in case we won't be evicted there, I think that my children [oldest sons] stay there [...].

Ate Janis's life story reveals further challenges of rural poor migrants struggling to secure their existence. They moved from their place of origin in the province with the prospect of farming on their own piece of land. The poor quality of the soil caused them to give up farming and to try to make a living of paid work. However, the forthcoming of unemployment generated further existential anxieties. Thus, scavenging again offered an alternative way of living and finally even opened the door to reaching their aim of living a better life in the city, through becoming a *homepartner* of the housing project. From this perspective, the housing project not only offers a way out of their uncertain existence but also a safe place to live. For Ate Janis this means a clean environment free of diseases and the prospect of one day owning the house and the lot in the housing project in order to pass it on to her children. But despite her wish to live far away from the dumpsite she still feels connected to her former house. As with Ate Lorna, the house and the familiar surrounding are part of her identity. They embody a certain period of her life. Even despite the adverse living conditions in the dumpsite settlement, she likes to look back, remembering the good times they had there.

The life of Ate Janis reflects the interrelatedness of humans and the material environment they live in. The practice of scavenging on the dumpsite structures the routines of everyday life. It affects the way of thinking about the world and about one's own position therein. Here, it becomes evident how identities are shaped through the conditions and material qualities of the living environment. In chapter 5, we meet Ate Janis again. Her case will serve as an example to describe one mode of organizing and appropriating the house. Her life story is interesting insofar as since they have been living in the housing project her husband gave up scavenging on the dumpsite and now secures their existence as a scrap dealer. With a small truck, he drives around the city in search for recyclable materials either to sell or to use for their own purposes – not only a consequence of relocation but also to the introduction of waste separation.⁶⁴ I will

⁶⁴ The introduction of waste separation had major impacts on the scavengers. Since then, there are only few materials left which can be sold. Thus, a lot of scavengers now drive around the streets with *traysikuls* or *traysikats* looking for recyclable materials in order to pick them up before they are collected by the municipal garbage collectors.

show that his choice of business allowed them to make major alterations in the house within few months and to give it an individual shape, while others need much longer. I will discuss the different approaches and the reasons in chapter 5.1.

3.6 VITO – *WE LOOKED LIKE SANTA CLAUS*

Results from the interview conducted on December 6th, 2011:

Vito is 25 years old. He married at the age of 18 participating in a mass wedding⁶⁵ that was organized by Born Again Christians for converted scavengers of Bankal. He moved to the housing project in January 2009 with his wife and his three daughters, who are 5, 3 and 1 years old. He is employed at the MRF as a garbage collector. In his free time he drives *traysikul* to earn some extra money. His parents broke up when he was three years old. That was the time when he and his father moved to Manila:

Vito: I grew up in Pasil Cebu. Then, when I was three years old we went to Manila, my dad and me. It was there where I became aware of my fate. Because we, my father, we sold buckets, washing pans, we walked around. [...] Our dwelling was set up on four pieces of bamboo poles, then we just put a sheet on top. Because we just arrived there so we didn't buy plywood. Then slowly (after a while) we exchanged the sheet with tarpaulin. That's it. Bit by bit we built a dwelling. Then, under our place – because we were above – it went right down because there was a creek underneath. At high tide, our dwelling almost was on the same level with the sea - very frightful. [At the place where we stayed] we have no relatives there. We got to know the people because we were lucky. There in Manila we went scavenging there at Smokey Mountain.⁶⁶ We went there close to the creek because it was at the border bank of the creek so [...] when you walked there in the distance there was Smokey Mountain. [...] It was very high, we used to call it Smokey Mountain. We were used to it at that time. But our work in these days were tires, we constantly were looking for good ones, whether they can be still used for a vehicle. If so, we brought them to a refurbish-store. What we brought them was good because no one else brought it there because they were dumped. Then for transportation we used a kurmata, I mean a pushcart, a very big pushcart. That's how we transported the tires. [...] When I went to school and started grade 2 we moved back here [Cebu] because my dad had a sibling here, a sister. We sold our house and lot there so we came here directly. When we arrived here, I saw my younger siblings. Then we moved there to Ibo. There I went to school until grade 6. Then we

⁶⁵ Mass weddings are part of the developmental programs of religious organizations for urban poor because weddings are expensive, especially religious weddings. In mass weddings, the organization bears all financial expenses and provides the wedding dress, the wedding ring, etc. In November 2011, I participated in a mass wedding organized by a Korean and Australian congregation of 'Born again Christians' for couples living in the dumpsite of Mandaue City and other urban poor of the baranggay. All in all, sixty couples participated in the wedding, which was celebrated in the Municipal Sports Hall.

⁶⁶ Smokey Mountain is the term used for the largest landfill of Manila. It was called Smokey Mountain because it was constantly covered in smoke of the numerous fires caused by flammable substances of decomposing wastes and by burning cables to get out the metals. It was officially closed in 1995 and the thousands of scavengers transferred to the next landfill of Payatas. In 1998, this landfill attracted global attention when over two hundred scavengers were killed by a landslide on the dumpsite. For further information see (Madina 2007: 188-189).

moved here to Soong because the dumpsite used to be in Ibo, and then when the dumpsite moved we also moved here, because there was nothing anymore. Then I grew up here. [...] I was ten years old, when the dumpsite started operating here [Bankal]. [The house was] only made of wood, discarded ones, such that were discarded and straight. That's what we made of our dwelling. Only simple and just big enough that we all fit in to sleep. [...].

[Life] there, it's noisy, even though it's already night really, it's noisy. Then there is a lot of trouble when it rains. It is muddy when it rains. Then when they flatten the garbage it stinks terribly. [...] In Manila it was different because the dumpsite was far away and then here it is very close and then there in Manila it was very far away you were far away from the dirt so your collecting at that time, what we collected were tires. We only transported tires and then here at the dumpsite we transport garbage. It is different from what we collected in Manila. So here it is different. [...].

When I was in grade 5 and grade 6 I didn't go scavenging because we just moved here. But before, when I was still little we carried a sack over our shoulder and went to the sea at five o'clock in the morning. We went there close together into the sea to collect garbage. [...] Our house was close to the sea and there was a lot of garbage dumped in the sea. Sometimes [...] we found money that had been dropped. Sometimes we found 5 pesos. We were so many in those days. Well, we didn't have money. We carried sacks over our shoulder. We looked like Santa Claus ... We started there [...] and walked up to here selling what we found at Victors, sometimes we earned about 50, we were very happy. [...] If we were called like basurero, we called 'the basureros are coming: put out your garbage' [...], we would just call 'bring your garbage outside ha, segregated', that was fine for me. [I didn't feel ashamed about it] because that was our work. [...]

Mel: Did you try rugby?

Vito: Yes, [...] because of my work I didn't sleep, because the drugs took the drowsiness away. So, I didn't sleep but at that time I would not say that I was addicted. For me it was just that I didn't sleep because it was medicine to avoid falling asleep. So that's what I used at that time. But now, I don't take anything anymore. I gave up on it when I got married. I would not say that I used it every day. I was able to control it. But I gave it up. [...].

Vito's life story is representative for hundreds of thousands of children who grow up in precarious circumstances in Filipino megacities like Manila or Cebu. He experienced broken family relationships, was involved in making a living of scavenging at Manila's largest and world-famous dumpsite called Smokey Mountain when he was still very young. He lived in different extremely impoverished living conditions, most of the time close to urban dumpsites. Moving, as he pointed out, was mainly motivated by the search for work. Making a living of discarded materials and scraps thus meant to follow the materials, or in other words: if the dumpsite moves, the people move too, as it represents their basis of existence.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ This is still a typical phenomenon in the Philippines today. At the time of my fieldwork, the municipal dumpsite of Cebu City, located in Inayawan, was closed and transferred to a different *barangay*. With the garbage went also the scavengers.

Vito calls scavenging his *fate*. He experienced scavenging from a child's perspective rather like a game and a common activity with friends. However, as he pointed out, it also brought him into contact with drugs as a means of coping with daily routines on the dumpsite. In the interview, he described the characteristic appearance of children wandering the streets looking for recyclables carrying empty rice sacks thrown over their shoulder: '*we looked like Santa Claus*'. We talked about his feelings when people would call him and his companions *basureros*, meaning 'garbage men'. He pointed out that at that time he didn't really care. They would rather use the term themselves to announce their presence asking the people to bring their garbage outside. For him, scavenging was a resource of earning a living. Therefore, he called it *his work*. Thus, he turned it from a highly stigmatized activity, considered as indecent, into a legitimate way to provide a living. This is a crucial aspect for how scavengers legitimate their right of existence differentiating it from begging or stealing. In contrast to Vito, Ate Janis does not consider scavenging as (legitimate) work. From her point of view, work is performed in a clean setting with workers wearing a uniform, as it is common for formal employment in most working areas in the Philippines. Likewise, for her it is a matter of the aesthetic conditions of a workplace to call an activity *work* rather than a matter of the physical effort involved. The daily physical experience and confrontation with dirt (besides other nuisances) and its impact on their everyday life on the dumpsite, however, is something that Vito and Ate Jeannette experienced in a similar way, which – as expressed by Kuya Kent –, they only really became aware of after moving to the housing project.

Mel: How do you feel about life in [the housing project]?

Vito: It's nice because it is not noisy, no nuisances, no disorder. Then you can even sleep at noontime, there is no noise! It's quiet. [It's not like there in the past] because it's noisy, even at night really it is noisy. Then there are quarrels. When it rains it gets muddy because of the rain, and when they flatten the garbage it stinks. In the past you could not see your body because it was all garbage and then the people you saw were all dirty people who don't change their clothes. Here (housing project), it's different because it's clean and then your appearance is different because you are living in the housing, which is clean. [...].

Mel: Is it important for you to look clean?

Vito: Yes. [...] So that the people don't call you messy. Because often people would call you careless [...] it seems it hurts you [...].

In the statement above, the impact of dirt in the lives of scavengers becomes evident again. Vito does not feel ashamed of making a living of scavenging but he feels stigmatized because of the dirt that sticks to the body. As he pointed out, people therefore tend to consider scavengers as *careless*. However, as described more detailed by Ate Janis, it is not a *matter of carelessness*

but rather a *matter of helplessness* in the face of powerful dirt covering everything and everybody who is gets into its way in a layer of dust and mud. Thus, it seems that through moving to the housing project Vito is finally able – to say it in a figurative manner – to cast off the dirt of the past and to give his life a new shape and thus to gradually leave the dumpsite behind. That this is his aspiration, he points out in his prospects for the nearer future of the next ten years:

Mel: What would you like to achieve within the next ten years? For you and for your children?

Vito: For me, when I am 35 years old my ambition is that I can make a living as traysikul driver at the market, that is my wish that when I am old in the very far future that my children will be married that they have their own, if their husband is also a traysikul driver they also will drive (?), but that's my wish to have a livelihood. Because now, I cannot go to the market because I am not yet a member of the franchise, there is a franchise. [...] my children will have finished school, that is my endeavor that they will succeed. [...] High school is fine because then they could work at MEPZA⁶⁸, but college I cannot promise because it is expensive, it empties your pocket.

Vito's story reveals that marriage and moving to the housing project prompted a major change in his life. It seems as if these two decisions enabled him to give his life a new direction leading him and his family away from relying on practices involved in making a living of garbage. His aspiration to work fully as a *traysikul* driver shows how hard he tries to break with what he called his *fate* – namely to scavenge on the dumpsite to earn money for a living. Part of this ambition is also his wish that his children will obtain a high-school degree to fulfill the basic conditions to find a proper employment in the future and thus to continue the pathway he prepared for them in order to live a better life.

The presented six biographies of my research partners aim to provide – exemplarily - an insight into the different former *lifeworlds* of the residents of the housing project, not as an end in itself but rather as background information to better understand how my research partners experience and shape the transition process from one living environment to another. As I will show in chapter 5, the biographies and habituated practices strongly influence the transition process with regard to initial modes of organizing the new house, to expectations towards the housing project and to occurring feelings about the performed change of lifestyle. In the following, I briefly summarize the main aspects of urban-rural migration and what I call 'eking out a niche existence'.

⁶⁸ MEPZA is the abbreviation for an industrial zone on Mactan Island.

3.7 RETROSPECTION: EKing OUT A NICHE EXISTENCE

The main motive for rural-urban migration is the search for better economic opportunities offered in the city. It comes along with the desire of parents to enable a school education for their children. A high-school degree is the prerequisite for being employed at a company. Children, especially firstborns, are – as pointed out in the interviews – expected to support their parents in order to provide for the family. Thus, the higher the educational degree, the better are the employment opportunities inside or outside the Philippines. What became obvious in the life stories is that in the parent generation, representing the majority of my interview partners, the oldest child had no or only a low educational degree. In order to support the family financially, the oldest daughters worked as maids like Ate Lorna or Nanay Corazon's and Kuya Kent's eldest sisters. Accordingly, Nanay Corazon and the younger siblings of Ate Lorna and Kuya Kent could go to school. On the contrary, Ate Clara, who also was the oldest in her family, managed to finish high school and college by being a working student.

It also became evident that the parental hope of a good employment for their children is fused with the hope that their children – as soon as they work - will support them financially. The financial aid becomes an ever-important factor for the families after moving to the housing project, considering the new financial responsibilities the beneficiaries are facing. The generational change described by Nanay Corazon is another interesting aspect, although not mentioned by Kuya Kent. While Kuya Kent relies on his daughters' financial support until they marry, like his parents did, Nanay Corazon, on the contrary, mainly acknowledges her daughter's personal needs. She does not right away and fully absorb the income of her daughter after she starts working for a credit institute. Rather, she accepts her satisfying her needs of personal belongings like new clothes. This attitude is rather uncommon, as I learned during my fieldwork with two of my assistants. For them, being the eldest daughter in the family meant that all the money earned was completely consumed by the family – while in contrast eldest sons were allowed to keep at least half of it for their personal needs. These include buying new clothing and spending money with friends in order to *exist* in their male peer group and maintain social relations. Nanay Corazon's case furthermore reveals how children are integrated in the housing project insofar as they might be the ones who finally pay off the mortgage for the unit and take over the ownership. This parent-child-support system is effective as long as children are not yet married. The financial obligation towards parents and siblings is less mandatory after marriage.

The decision to dwell in a certain place is mainly motivated by three aspects. Firstly, by an affordable dwelling place; secondly, by the presence of relatives or “province mates” (Pinches 1994) and, thirdly, by the location of the work place, which should be situated close to their

dwelling in order to save work-related travel expenses. Building materials for informal dwellings are either bought or gathered from along the streets. Dumpsite dwellers often make use of discarded materials collected at the dumpsite. They also sell gathered materials like cardboard or tarpaulin to other informal settlers who do not have or decline access to the dumpsite. Even though the living conditions in squatter areas are devastating, rural migrants and urban poor with little financial means, have - as described by Pinches (1994) – few or no alternatives than to dwell in a squatter area. Here, as pointed out by my research partners, the rent is affordable or dwelling is even for *free*. However, the dwellers have to endure the specific living conditions of a squatter area. These are experienced as negative regarding the density of dwellings, noise pollution and low or completely missing hygienic standards due to the absence of sanitary facilities with a proper wastewater system. The main disadvantage of squatter areas is their transience and vulnerability due to their illegal status and material conditions. Every day, informal settlers see themselves confronted with the potential risk of losing their habitation because of demolition or natural calamities, which means the potential loss of their only basis of existence. Berner (2000) pointed out that the dwelling of informal settlers, how small and squalid it may be, probably represents their largest investment. Thus, it is the one asset they can least afford to lose. “Its loss, for instance, through eviction, often leads to a downward spiral of homelessness, marginalization and further impoverishment” (ibid.: 556). My female research partners pointed out that they constantly suffered from existential fears manifesting themselves in stress and nervous strain because of experiencing these uncertainties daily. Nevertheless, the statements of my research partners show that their former houses were their homes, with which they feel strongly emotionally related.

Living in a squatter area or on a dumpsite impacts the self-perception of the informal dwellers. Squatter areas and especially dumpsite settlements have negative reputations. They are considered as urban eyesores, as retreats for criminals and home of criminal fraternities. Ate Clara for example described what her relatives thought about her lifestyle in the squatter area. They called it *a place for the pigs* rather than for human beings. However, informal settlers who dwell in squatter areas situated in urban niches usually participate and engage in urban life even beyond the borders of the squatter area. This seems to be different for dumpsite dwellers who make a living of scavenging. The dumpsite becomes a self-contained living environment, in which everything revolves around scavenging and its outcomes. Scavenging and the activities and processes attached to it structure daily and weekly routines. As pointed out by Vito, people become part of the landscape. It seems as if they cannot be distinguished from the environment and the things in there. Dirt, mud and smoke – present everywhere – seem to stick to both people and things. It looks like people and things merge with the environment. This is at least how Ate

Janis and Vito described it. They experienced the dirt as being like a part of them. No matter how much effort they put into cleaning themselves, they still felt dirty when leaving the place. The interrelation between my research partners and their dwelling environment triggered the feeling of shame and social inferiority about their way of living, particularly vis-à-vis relatives. Thus, the condition of their habitation had a major impact on their self-perception. Here, the interrelation between people and the material environment they live in becomes evident, namely in the *embodiment of aesthetic experiences*.

Despite these rather extremely negative aspects of living in a squatter area – i.e. the poor, unhygienic and dangerous living conditions – my research partners nevertheless also described positive facets. These mainly refer to the squatter areas' well-developed infrastructure: access to free or affordable water (from a well and/or from the public water supply), (free although illegal) access to electricity, food (fresh, tinned and cooked), entertainment (Internet cafés, *vid-eoke* bars, shopping malls in walking distance), informal means of income, transportation, social interactions and personal relationships. When my research partners spoke about their new life in the housing project compared to their former life in the squatter areas, they made use of the contrasting words *mingaw* and *lingaw*. Both words are used to describe atmospheres. *Mingaw* means 'deserted', 'lonely', or 'boring'. It is also used to refer to remote areas. *Lingaw*⁶⁹ in contrast describes the opposite. It means 'fun' as well as 'to amuse', 'to cheer', 'to enjoy' or 'to be well-entertained'. In the housing project, however, a common expression is *walay lingaw*, meaning 'there is nothing to do, no entertainment, nothing to divert oneself'.⁷⁰ This assessment has become particularly evident in Ate Lorna's following statement:

Ate Lorna: Here (in the housing project) even if you have money you starve. Because here is nothing you can buy, you have to go far... that's exhausting. [...] There it's much nicer because everything is close-by really [...] Life there is vivid and full of energy, you are happy but your house is rather ugly (smile).

In retrospect, my research partners seem to become more aware of the rather positive aspects of their former niche existence, missing its advantages. They accept the negative aspects of squatter life because in return it offered them a space of opportunities in the form of a free or low-cost dwelling place, a range of different income opportunities, access to and participation in the benefits of urban life – even if only in a limited way. From this perspective, eking out a niche existence as such means to live a self-determined life and to manage it even with only a small budget.

⁶⁹ *Nalingaw man ko* means, *I am happy*.

⁷⁰ I will further outline my research partners' concept of *lingaw* and *mingaw* in Chapter 4.3.3.

This feeling strongly contributes to the development of discrepancies between past and present dwelling experiences and thus to how my research partners value the performed change of lifestyle. In the transition process, the feeling of comfort becomes a central matter for my research partners' sense of satisfaction. The feeling of comfort and the conditions for generating a feeling of comfort will be a major topic throughout this study because it depicts one of the central aspirations of my research partners. They all grew up in impoverished living conditions varying from slight to extreme poverty. Especially the beneficiaries in the age group of fifty to over sixty explained that *paningkamot ko*, i.e. they worked hard or made an effort to make things come true, like e.g. providing their children with a good education or having a decent house. My research partners strive for an easier and more comfortable life for themselves but especially for their children. The housing project with its infrastructure, facilities and programs aims to offer its *homepartners* and their families a material, economic and social basis for reaching this aim. However, what seemed to be, at first glimpse, a place of dreams and as such the destination of the journey they started years ago in the province turns out to be another challenge, especially in the phase of transition.

4. A CONSTRUCTED COMMUNITY

Building homes and lives— this is the vision of a socialized housing project on Mactan Island, Philippines. In 2007 it was implemented by a faith-based non-governmental organization as a relocation site for dumpsite dwellers and informal settlers from Metro Cebu. It is the largest and most comprehensive resettlement project of the organization aiming to reduce the number of informal settlers in urban danger zones and dumpsites in general and to offer urban poor an alternative to government run relocation sites in particular. The NGO's socialized housing project considers itself as an alternative to other relocation projects, as it not only offers decent, low-cost housing in a clean and safe environment but moreover provides its *beneficiaries* with a Human and Community Development (HCD) program to assist them to establish an autonomous and self-supporting community. That means that with infrastructure development, community organizing activities and livelihood development, the NGO aims to pave a way out of impoverished living conditions and moreover to provide the project's *beneficiaries* with a new chance in life and a perspective for the future. With this approach, the organization strives to create what in urban studies is defined as the standards for a comfortable neighborhood, namely a safe environment providing “good access to shopping, employment opportunities, community-based services, and friends and relatives” (Murdie and Teixeira 2003: 132). In this definition, Murdie and Teixeira describe an appropriate house as

“a good quality dwelling that is spacious and affordable. It also provides privacy, identity, and safety. The latter, they point out, is important to everyone, but especially to immigrants and refugees, many of whom have experienced considerable disruption in their move from one country to another” (ibid.).

This also applies to the informal settlers. Many of them come from rural areas from the surrounding islands of Cebu. In search for work and an affordable place to live they moved from one dwelling place to another. For the transition process, the organization names two major challenges among others:

- (1) Sustaining the livelihood development initiatives to provide income for the families so that they can support their basic needs and continue paying their monthly amortization;
- (2) Values formation, personhood development and consciousness-raising activities to fully bring-about positive changes to the character and attitude of the people who were not used to following policies and rules. They were used to *survival of the fittest environments* and the *dominance of the strongest and the toughest*.

I choose these two challenges, which I call the economic and the political challenge, because I experienced that they represent the overarching challenges of the socialized housing project, for both the organization, which aims to bring about change and for the residents who are expected to perform a change of lifestyle in the process of transition – a process analyzed thoroughly in chapter 5. Here, I will show that these two challenges have the strongest impact on the residents with regard to their ability to perform a change of lifestyle successfully.

In this chapter, I will introduce the project. Therefore, I will first briefly outline the background and development of the socialized housing project. In a second step, I will explain the Human and Community Development Program and in a third step describe the characteristic features of the housing project focusing on its social aesthetics.

4.1 BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOCIALIZED HOUSING PROJECT

As already mentioned above, the socialized housing project was implemented by a Filipino faith-based non-governmental organization (NGO) located in Cebu City. In the early 1990s, two Missionaries of the Divine Word, both members of the administration team at the University of San Carlos, started to investigate and to become involved in the *lifeworlds* of fisher folks, urban poor, informal city settlers, female and under-age or juvenile prostitutes, and scavengers of the four dumpsites of Metro Cebu. They encouraged the so-called Community Extension Services (CES) of the university to transform their charitable activities from occasional activities into a programmed, sustainable and liberalized approach development. Within this approach, students, faculty and staff volunteers of the NGO then started to actively engage in organizing the fisher folks and dumpsite dwellers and offered teaching programs for preschool children. Then, in 1999, the abovementioned NGO was founded in order to take over the activities of the CES and to further develop their programs. Along with numerous international partners, a German foundation mainly supports the activities and projects of the NGO. Since 1999, the NGO has expanded its area of activities from Metro Cebu across the Visayas and Mindanao. Here, they offer projects in the areas of education, economic development, human and community development, and advocacy for women and children. These programs also form the basis for activities in the socialized housing projects.

All in all, the NGO already initiated three socialized housing projects in different peripheral areas of Metro Cebu. At first, they intended to offer scavengers an alternative to the inhuman living conditions at the dumpsites and thus, a new chance in life. The socialized housing project

on Mactan Island is the biggest and most extensive relocation site. The period for the development was six years starting in 2006 to 2012, and was planned to be implemented within three phases:

- (1) Phase 2006: purchase of the lot and the preparation of the relocation site.
- (2) Phase 2007 to 2009: development of the housing site (involving the installation of the drainage system and the construction of the first 100 houses and the worship center) and start of the formal organization of the community and the establishment of the cooperative and alternative livelihood.
- (3) Phase August 2009 to 2012: strengthening of the *Basic Ecclesial Community* (BEC) towards a self-governed association and of the Cooperative that bears the prime responsibility to provide alternative livelihood.

By 2010, the construction of the first 100 houses was completed as well as of a two-class room pre-school, a multipurpose center, a kiosk, an activity and basketball court, a children's playground and a wall of three meters' height surrounding the project site. The final 150 houses as well as a further building serving as bakery and herbarium were completed in 2011. The last construction projects, which were added to the initial project plans, were a mini-clinic and a water supply system. These were finished in February 2012.

From October 2008 onwards, the NGO started to relocate its *beneficiaries* from its different *partner communities*⁷¹ in batches. The first batch of 48 families from the dumpsite settlement located in the neighborhood and two squatter areas from Lapu-Lapu-City and Mandaue City transferred to the housing site on October 28, 2008. At this time, the housing project was only in the second phase of development and thus still under construction. By the time of my fieldwork, about 115 families had transferred to the housing project. The remaining 135 families were in the process of application and selection. They mainly belonged to a Partner-Community of informal settlers that already experienced numerous forced evictions and thus urgently needed to be relocated. They transferred to the housing project in the course of 2012.

With relocating families from different dumpsite settlements and from different squatter areas, the organization faces the challenge to create a new community out of families from different local and social backgrounds. This does not only imply to prevent group formations between

⁷¹ In certain squatter areas and dumpsite settlements of Metro Cebu, the organization formed partner communities in order to support urban poor through social activities, scholarship programs for children and livelihood initiatives.

families from same squatter areas but also to overcome feelings of resentments prevalent especially against former scavengers⁷². Besides numerous differentiating factors among those families, they all share the NGO membership. In the respective squatter areas and dumpsite settlements from where the families originate, the NGO already formed *partner communities* based on a similar communal structure like in the housing project. Thus, the *beneficiaries* were already familiar with the structure, activities and responsibilities of their membership in the BEC.

In the Philippines, *Basic Ecclesial Communities*⁷³ were founded in the early 1970s in response to the Marcos dictatorial regime (cf. Nadeau 2010; Maboloc 2017). They emerged from *Liberation Theology*, which in the Philippines is called the *Theology of Struggle*. According to the American anthropologist Nadeau⁷⁴ three types of activities are characteristic for BEC activities these are *liturgical*, *developmental*, or *transformative* (Nadeau 2002) activities. While in general BECs rather engage in varying amounts in these different activities, the NGO combines all

⁷² Consciously, I only remember three incidents, where resentments were expressed yet rather implicit. The first incident was within a conversation with a close neighbor who told me about thievery in the housing project. She considered it a consequence of the kind of people living here especially those originating from the dumpsite. The second incident occurred during the preparation of the BEC Christmas Party, which in the end had to be canceled as a consequence following the violent death of a teenager of the housing project. The FGs practiced for a dance competition. One night, one of the FGs practiced in the neighboring street and I went watching. There, I met Nanay Corazon who elaborated that their FG is the most active one in the community, but that this will change as soon as the FGs will be re-formed to integrate the new residents. She complained about this fact because she felt comfortable with her FG as it incidentally was composed mainly by residents from the same squatter area, i.e. friends. A fact which highlighted the activeness of this FG. The third and most explicit experience I had in this regard happened at my second visit in the housing project in 2014. Again it was a conversation in which two former neighbors spoke about the present situation in the housing project, pointing out the social differences showing up between the two main roads. They asked me how I perceived the 'look' of the other main road, questioning if I would not agree that it looks like a squatter area over there. A result, which they traced back to the new residents all originating from a specific squatter area. For my better understanding they informed me that 'they' already in the past usually had presented themselves in a neglected and pitiful manner in order to evoke pity while they, even though they are also poor always take care of their outward appearance.

⁷³ Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs), also known as Basic Christian Communities (BCC) (cf. Nadeau 2010) can be found in most developing countries (i.e. in Latin America, Africa and Asia). They are small communities of Christian poor, in which all members are equal. BECs are considered as a paradigm shift in ecclesiology, i.e. that a church which used to be centered around bishops and priests, now turned towards people and the community (Wilfred 2013: 19; see for further information about BECs Krämer & Vellguth 2013). In the Philippines, the BEC movement emerged in the time of the Marcos regime as a reaction to his authoritarian dictatorship. "It presents a new revolutionary movement transcending class-based party politics and hierarchical organization in order to build an alternative system of power represented by the people" (Holden and Nadeau 2010: 91). BECs gave rise to *liberation theology* referred to as *theologies of struggle*. From a creative and non-dogmatic neo-Marxist perspective, postmodern scholars consider the rise of BECs in the Philippines "a revolutionary social and religious movement" (ibid.: 89). As the Philippine government fails in providing basic social services for the poor, "church workers involved in the BEC movement are encouraging the poor to help each other by pooling their talents and resources to meet their needs as a caring and compassionate community" (ibid.: 91). The SVD priests who founded the NGO are also involved in this movement. By organizing BECs in squatter areas and dumpsite settlements, they took a first step in providing their members with the necessary resources to create self-reliant and sustainable communities. With transferring the informal settlers to the housing project, they also transferred the BEC structure in order to develop a post-capitalist culture that is based on social relationships intended to emancipate the poor.

⁷⁴ Kathleen M. Nadeau is an anthropologist who conducted extensive ethnographic fieldwork in the Philippines, especially in Mindanao and in Cebu on Basic Ecclesial Communities and Liberation Theology (see. E.g. Nadeau 2002).

three in the so called *Human and Community Development Program*. They consider this a holistic approach to community development to meet the spiritual and material needs of the people and also to contribute to transformation of Filipino society from bottom-up.

4.2. HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

“Liberation theology is at work where God’s grace is at work in the creativity of persons. Our responsibility toward making others truly free from the fetters of oppression means that we acknowledge the liberating presence of God in our midst. If the majority of Christians have a deep faith in God, then they should transcend their worldly political beliefs and serve their fellow human beings who are in need” (Maboloc 2017: 9-10).

In the light of *Liberation Theology*, the NGO aims to liberate its members from unjust and impoverished living conditions in squatter areas and dumpsite settlements through relocation in socialized housing projects. Their concept of socialized housing is based on the idea of a holistic development of persons within their communities. However, a community not simply evolves by bringing people together in one place. It does not simply create overnight but needs to grow in the course of time. The NGO is aware of this fact and therefore implemented a so-called *Human and Community Development* (HCD) program:

„The HCD-Program involves organizing the people into small communities and capacitating them to live within that structure. It is primarily responsible for ensuring and providing basic needs, covering capacity and institutional building, socialized housing, access to livelihood funds, skills and marketing, water system, health and nutrition, and the protection of the environment. Thus, development is achieved through empowerment. This program also involves building functional networks and partnership with the local government units and agencies, so that the partners are represented in the major decision-making arena of society”.

Three social workers are assigned to the housing project. They are in charge of implementing the different initiatives and activities in cooperation with the *homepartners*. Furthermore, they supervise the elected leaders of the BEC and the members of the Board of Directors (BODs) in order to enable and empower them to take over full responsibility for all communal affairs after the termination of the project phase scheduled for December 2012.

The first major activity of the HCD-Program is community development. In the following I will explain the special characteristics of the implemented community structure, consisting of a cooperative founded especially for the social housing project as well as the basic ecclesial community.

4.2.1 COMMUNITY STRUCTURE

The community structure is based on membership in the BEC of the housing project. The BEC is in charge of all central activities of community life. Of each household, one family member, usually the wife or mother, is mandatory a member of both the BEC and the cooperative. The supreme authority of the BEC is the *General Assembly* (GA) meeting once a month. The members are obliged to participate in the meeting. In the GA, the members democratically discuss and decide about all communal concerns. Every year, the General Assembly elects the members for the *Board of Directors* (BODs) for the BEC as well as for each committee. Each board of directors consists of a chairperson, a vice chairperson, a secretary and a treasurer.

The so-called *Executive Committee* represents the executive authority of the BEC, consisting of five elected members. This committee is in charge of dealing with and solving internal conflicts. Furthermore, it has the authority to punish violations of the *Occupancy Rules and Deeds of Restrictions* and functions as mediator between the so-called *homepartners*, the Board of Directors of the BEC, and the NGO represented by the social workers.

The so-called *SPECSE-committees* organize the thematic activities in the housing project. SPECSE is the abbreviation for the following six thematic fields: spiritual⁷⁵, political⁷⁶, economic⁷⁷, cultural⁷⁸, social⁷⁹, and ecological⁸⁰. The social workers assigned for the housing project supervise the meetings and activities of the BEC and its committees, set programmatic targets and provide leadership trainings⁸¹.

In the formal structure of the BEC, the lowest and most informal entities are the so-called *Family Groups* (FG). During my research, there were 15 Family Groups (FG). Three FGs form one zone of an overall of five zones. The FGs serve to help the *homepartners* originating from

⁷⁵ The spiritual committee is in charge of preparing church services, prayer meetings and organizing activities for religious holidays.

⁷⁶ The political committee takes care of political-linkages with public agencies like e.g. the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and is in charge of permits and registrations.

⁷⁷ The economic committee is in charge of financial affairs and livelihood activities of the BEC and works in close cooperation with the Cooperative.

⁷⁸ The main task of the cultural committee is to take care of educational activities for the youth. These involve the sponsorship program offered by the NGO, and to organize activities for the sponsored children.

⁷⁹ The social committee is in charge of health purposes and other activities involving the participation of community members. With regard to health purposes, they supervise the activities of the so-called Community Health Volunteers (CHV) and arrange the two-weekly visits of the German Doctors.

⁸⁰ The ecology committee takes care of ecological activities within the housing project, like e.g. *Bayanihan* a monthly cleanup activity where all residents are expected to participate to cleanup the communal areas and the drainage system. Furthermore, they are in charge of the *vermiculture* production and its sale.

⁸¹ Leadership trainings often take place in resorts or hotels. Here, the members experience – often for the first time the comfort of sleeping in a proper bed, in an air conditioned room with a bathroom with shower and hot and cold tub water and being served *fancy food*. The idea behind is to enable the members to properly behave in such an environment and to learn how to use these *modern* facilities. Ate Lorna once spoke about her experiences when she participated in a training for the first time. She was afraid of sleeping in the bed covered in white linen. She stayed awake during the whole night being afraid of death. For her, white linen is only used to cover dead bodies. She giggled when she told me about it. In retrospection, she was amused about how she responded to this unfamiliar setting and the ideas and feelings it evoked at that time.

different local and social backgrounds to become familiar with each other through joint activities. Thus, each FG meets once a week for a faith sharing section. Additionally, it is once a week in charge for preparing a meal for the feeding program and for cleaning a communal area assigned. Besides these weekly collective responsibilities, the members of the FGs prepare presentations and activities for communal events like the Christmas party or for the annual fiesta celebrations. Interestingly, the transfer to the housing project and the applied social structure lead to most residents giving up living with or in close distance to relatives also originating from the province and rural areas. Thereby, I learned that when choosing a dwelling place in the city most of my research partners considered it important to live close to relatives as they present the most important and most reliant social network for urban poor e.g. in case of sickness or financial difficulties. That means, moving to the housing project entails a shift in the residents' social relations with neighbors (and the familial coined social structure).

With the implementation of this communal structure, the NGO seeks to provide its *homepartners* with a basic frame to develop a new community. However, during my fieldwork I experienced the difficulties arising out of this construct. As the communal structure and its activities only involve members, i.e. only one member of each household, non-members feel not or are not addressed and thus rather remain excluded from communal activities. As most members are women, this is mainly the case for the men⁸². Therefore, the communal structure creates a *gender gap* within the community. There is a further consequence coming into existence springing from the community structure or rather from of the requirement of active membership. As just pointed out, most active members are women. In the housing project, they are required to actively engage in communal affairs. For most women, this brings along major challenges for managing everyday life not only with regard to household chores and childcare but also creating a conflict between either fulfilling the required active membership obligations or searching for employment in order to be able to more easily meet the financial obligations of being a *homepartner*. In contrast to former membership activities in the squatter areas and dumpsite settlements, in the BEC and especially in the cooperative, leader positions involve high responsibilities, which most members fear because they feel insufficiently educated to take over business responsibilities. Furthermore, active leadership is time consuming coming close to being a full-time job. This is especially the case for BOD-members, who thus are kept from searching for employment. Committee leaders and BOD-members however are not paid for their work.

⁸² The only time, I experienced voluntary participation of male non-members in communal activities was in preparation of the annual fiesta. One evening, I saw a group of men renewing the field markings of the basketball court for the basketball league.

They only receive compensation. The result is that while they meet their membership obligations, they struggle to meet their financial obligations. Delayed payments because of leadership obligations, the NGO considers as valid reasons and thus shows fairness. Nevertheless, as I will show in chapter 5.3, open credits for the amortization - even if accepted - hinder *homepartners* e.g. to apply for an electricity connection, which has major effects on their sense of satisfaction about the performed change of lifestyle and moreover on their sense of well-being. This leads me to the second major activity of the HCD-Program that is livelihood development.

4.2.2 LIVELIHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Livelihood development serves on the one hand to create employment opportunities for the residents, and on the other hand to generate financial means for the community in order to become self-supporting. Therefore, the organization established a cooperative. The cooperative is the economic arm of the housing project. The *Board of Directors* (BOD) consists of a chairperson, a vice chairperson, a secretary and a treasurer plus one director for each business like recycling, cooperation store, bakery⁸³, etc. The members of the cooperative elect the BODs for one year at the annual meeting. The BODs bear the greatest responsibility in the community insofar as they are in charge of achieving the community's goal to provide the residents with alternative livelihood. Therefore, they participate in short-term trainings offered by the organization or by the University of San Carlos in order to be enabled to fulfill their responsibilities with respect to future developments.

The cooperative maintains a range of different livelihood projects. The most efficient livelihood projects are the communal store⁸⁴, the water-delivery-service (which will be a topic of chapter 5.2) and recycling⁸⁵. Besides these, there is a range of other small-scale livelihood initiatives,

⁸³ In August 2011 the communal bakery was inaugurated. Therefore, residents from the housing project participated in a training on baking offered by the University of San Carlos. Three men were temporarily employed. However, the bakery was only operating for a couple of weeks and then had to go out of business due to missing permissions.

⁸⁴ The cooperative operates the only store in the housing project. Two women from the community are employed as saleswomen. Furthermore, members of the board of directors of the cooperative help out in alternating schedules. Certain product ranges are managed by FGs as livelihood project financed through micro-credits. The store offers the following products: instant powder for coffee, juice, iced tea, etc. in sachet packages, eggs, sugar, oil (sugar and oil are refilled in plastic bags), floor wax, rice (three different kinds of rice sorts are offered in open wooden boxes), soft drinks (sprite, coca cola in glass bottles, iced tea and juice in plastic bottles), mineral water in gallons and plastic bottles, condensed milk in tins, snacks (like bread, etc.), sweets, tinned food like fish, beans, meat, etc., soy sauce and vinegar. Curd soap, shampoo and hair gel (only sold in sachet packaging); single sanitary towels and diapers, etc. Furthermore, products made in the community are offered like handicraft or ginger powder.

⁸⁵ *Recycling* is the most efficient livelihood project. The cooperation facilitates the segregation and transportation of garbage from two campuses of the University of San Carlos⁸⁵. The recyclable materials in the garbage are transported to the housing project where employees of the cooperative sort them out in order to sell them to a scrap buyer. The scrap buyer picks up the materials every other Saturday.

which are group-based or individual-based. Group-based initiatives are the so-called *vermicul-ture-businesses* (subject to the remit of the ecology committee), the *herbal production* (subject to the remit of the community health-volunteers), or the purchase and sale of drugstore items in the cooperative store, which is subject to the remit of one family group. Individual-based initiatives are e.g. *handicrafts* (like weaving baskets, placemats, etc.), *furniture production* and *sewing* of school bags for scholars of the community. The small-scale initiatives often turn out to be only short-lived either because of a missing target market or because they do not exactly meet people's demands or preferences. Additionally, this is also connected to the relationship between expenditure (e.g. time and physical labor) and benefit, or perception of the return on investment as being insufficient. The income of the employees of the cooperative is measured by the respective profits of a livelihood project. Usually, they receive a share of 15% to 25%. Further development of livelihood initiatives, especially of a large-scale business offering potential full employment, presents the main challenge the cooperative faces in the process of creating an autonomous and self-sustaining community. Actually, that is the core, by which the NGO measures the success of the housing project. The reason here is that the residents, especially the former scavengers who gave up their main means of income when leaving the dumpsite, now depend on these initiatives in order to generate an income and thus to be able to both securing the existence of their families but also meeting the financial obligations of being a *homepartner*. As the cooperative was not yet able to offer large-scale businesses, it is the Multi-Recycling-Facility located next door to the housing project, which became the main employer for the residents. However, even though it is government run, the working conditions are rather precarious with regard to working hours, payment procedures and secure employment contracts. Offering alternative livelihood to its *beneficiaries* is not only a specific challenge of the socialized housing project presented here but of most relocations sites as pointed out by Berner (2000: 555). While in the squatter and dumpsite settlements, the uncertainty factor was about securing one's existence by a safe place to dwell, this factor shifts towards generating an income in the housing project. In the presented housing project, reasons for this - as I argue - are

- (1) higher expenses involved in dwelling,
- (2) the remote and isolated location of the housing project, which also causes higher expenses e.g. for transportation and
- (3) the communal policies making individual small-scale businesses - which are common in squatter settlements - more difficult.

This aspect I will further highlight in the course of chapter 5. In the following, I will now shortly outline the application and selection process in order to provide a better understanding of what it means to become a *homepartner* of the housing project.

4.2.3 APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Only members from so-called *Partner-Communities* of the NGO can apply for and avail a unit in the housing project. The applicants have to meet certain criteria stipulated in the so-called *Socialized Housing Project Policy Guidelines on Homepartner Selection*. These include e.g. a recommendation of the NGO employees, as well as of a selected member of the Partner-Community. Besides that, the applicants have to submit a certificate of no previous landholding and they have to ensure enough financial means (e.g. income) to allocate to the mortgage in order to repay the lot and the unit within a period of 25 years. Furthermore, the applicants have to submit a police record. In case of previous convictions, the applicant needs the approval of the NGO. Given the applicant becomes a *homepartner*, s/he will be under social worker's supervision. With the application, the applicants commit themselves to participate in the communal activities and livelihood initiatives of the BEC and the cooperative.

Selected applicants have to render 300 hours of *sweat equity* (volunteer labor) in the housing project. 100 hours are mandatory. The applicant is allowed to render the remaining 200 hours by a compensation payment in case that s/he is not able to participate e.g. because of employment. In the following, I will shortly present a statement from my research partner Ate Belen describing her equity experience:

Ate Belen: [...] Our equity was about 400 hours. That time we did extra hours [...] I will never forget about it because my hand was pinned to the door of the CR. Nelson kept on hammering. He hammered right through. [...] A nail was pierced through my hand. I was fixed to the door, [...], I cried when I was fixed to the door because I was injured. They did not know that my hand was there. I told them to stop. Then I tried to pull. Now my thumb [print] marks the door of the house of Gina I will never forget that. [...] That time we were in charge of helping to install the boards. We picked up the wood. We didn't do only weeding like now. Then when we were done with that task we swept the floor. What was bitter for us was when we had to dig the ground where the houses were built. The skin was torn and full of blisters. But it was for our use. [...] I felt happy and exhausted you know. Because we told stories and were joking. [...]. (Interview December 2nd, 2011, p. 42).

Ate Belen transferred to the housing project with the first batch of *beneficiaries* in October 2008. While the first batch of *beneficiaries* were involved in the construction of houses, later batches were assigned to easier tasks like e.g. weeding and cleaning of public areas. No matter what kind of task *beneficiaries* had to perform for their sweat-equity, it should become apparent that it is not about the work itself but rather about the effects involved in this advance service for the community. These vary depending on the perspective.

- (1) From the NGO's perspective, the *beneficiaries* prove and demonstrate by sweat-equity work their willingness to become a *homepartner* of the housing project by investing time and effort⁸⁶ for both their individual interest and for collective interests. It thus aims to prepare them for the collective responsibilities and obligations involved in the status of a *homepartner*. There is a further learning aspect involved in the experience of sweat equity, which I also became aware of through Ate Clara. Namely that with moving to the housing project, life will not only be easier but requires joint efforts and persistence, i.e. it requires the strength and will to withstand challenges instead of *just* dropping out or giving up in order to assert oneself.
- (2) From my research partners' perspective, the completion of the sweat equity enhances their feeling of pride about their new house. Thus, it is not only because of their miserable living conditions but because of their (physical) efforts and their willingness to make sacrifices that they have been selected as *beneficiaries* and were awarded with a house in the housing project.
- (3) From a theoretical perspective, it can be argued that through sweat-equity, the *beneficiaries* of the housing project are summoned to become physically involved in the development of their future living environment and thus, experience what might expect them. Or using MacDougall's term: they are invited to become part of the collective authorship that gives shape to its social landscape. The experience of sweat equity becomes *embodied*, not always in such an extreme way as in the case of Ate Belen's thumb, but at least insofar as it forms the basis of a collective identity between the members of the new community the NGO aims to establish in the housing project.

Before the qualified and selected applicants finally transfer, they have to attend an orientation seminar. Here, they learn about their rights and obligations as so-called *homepartners*. The rights and obligations of the *homepartners* are stipulated in the *Occupancy Rules and Deed of Restrictions*. At the end of the seminar, the social workers distribute the units to the new *homepartners* by raffling the keys. This shall ensure that the units are distributed by coincidence and not by favor. When the selection process is complete, a batch of so-called *awardees* is transferred to the housing project by undergoing the *Ritual of Transfer* called *The Exodus*.

⁸⁶ Here, also one of the values of the housing project becomes apparent, namely that personal engagement is higher valued than financial investments. This however does not mean that the *beneficiaries* are not obliged to meet their financial obligations. It rather means, that the NGO shows fairness in case of valid reasons for delayed payments, as it is aware of the financial challenges the *beneficiaries* and future *homepartners* face.

4.2.4 EXODUS – THE RITUAL OF TRANSFER

The Ritual of Transfer marks the spatial and legal transition from living in a squatter area or dumpsite settlement to the housing project. The ritual is based on the story of the biblical exodus – i.e. the departure of the Israelites from Egypt and herewith their liberation of the bondage of slavery. As pointed out by the executive director of the NGO, this story was chosen for the following reason:

“We have reflected that the condition of the dumpsite dwellers is in ‘similar’ condition as the Israelites under the yoke of slavery in Egypt. The dumpsite dwellers dreamt also of a promise land.”⁸⁷

The NGO’s executive director⁸⁸ performs the ritual. It starts with a sermon at the dumpsite settlement situated opposite the housing project. Afterwards, the participants walk in a procession from the dumpsite settlement to the housing project while praying the rosary. The executive director, some prayer leading women and the *awardees* with their families lead the procession. One of the prayer leading women carries the communal figurine of Mother Mary.

“This is to welcome the new residents. It was from the verse from the bible that the Lord promised a land to the Egyptians. To carry the figure of Mama Mary symbolizes the entry to the housing because it was the promise of God.”⁸⁹

The procession stops in front of the entrance gate of the housing project. Here, one of the *awardees* reads aloud a psalm of the bible and volunteers from the *awardees* take turns in giving a short speech. The speeches often begin with bitter and/or negative experiences from their former life, and end with expressing their feelings of joy and gratitude because of having been selected as *beneficiary* for the housing project. After the speeches, the procession enters the community in a form of dance called the *pilgrim dance*. The participants – *awardees* and residents alike – perform the pilgrim dance together when crossing the threshold of the housing project. In the video documentation⁹⁰ it is described as

“a form of prayer to commune with god through dancing. They do it in single steps as they enter the village asking God to journey with them in a dream place they wanted to be.”

In the interview, Ate Clara spoke about her feelings when she participated in the Ritual of Transfer. She said that she cried when performing the pilgrim dance; taking *two steps forward, one step back*. The dance seemed to reflect her feelings and the process she went through when fulfilling the application requirements. She explained that she kept on having second thoughts

⁸⁷ Email of April 1, 2013.

⁸⁸ The executive director of the NGO is a Missionary of the Divine Word and also a professor at the University of San Carlos.

⁸⁹ Statement of the prayer leading women.

⁹⁰ The first Ritual of Transfer was video documented by one of the Missionaries of the Divine Word. The video documentation was produced as testimony and explanation of the ritual to be presented to funders of the housing project.

about moving to the housing project. First because of financial reasons as she would have to travel to work every day for about 30 minutes by public transportation instead of walking. Furthermore, she was afraid of not finding customers⁹¹ in the community meaning higher expenses and less money at hand for her and her family. Secondly, because of the requirements placed on the housing project applicants. She felt exhausted of the equity work while working at the same time. Thus, she took turns with her husband. Moreover, she was afraid of not being able to comply the communal code of behavior like e.g. *being in time* and *working on your time management*. Furthermore, she knew that for the first couple of months her family would not have electricity inside the house. She kept on asking herself why she decided to move away from the squatter area where they were living close to the workplace and where they were fully equipped in the house. However, moving to the housing project was what she desired and for what she proved endurance.

The procession and the pilgrim dance commemorate the journey of the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land. This was pointed out by the executive director in the sermon of the first Ritual of Transfer on 28th October 2008 documented in the video documentation:

“Keeping the years that passed by, to remember the morning when the Egyptians crossed at nighttime till dawn after they made their pass over. It was the last supper in Egypt that they crossed the Red Sea until they reached their former land. So today is the celebration to remember. Hand carrying whatever we can carry like the Egyptians before because they believed that the Lord was true to His promise to provide a place to live.”

During the Ritual of Transfer, the *awardees* and their family members carry a range of household utilities like kitchen and sleeping utensils as well as main nutrition, like rice and water with them. I was told that it is an old Filipino habit to bring rice and water when moving. People do not simply bring a tiny amount but enough for at least three days. This is to ensure that a household never runs out of them in the new house. Some also bring sugar for harmony and *sweet relations* between the household members.

After the pilgrim dance, the washing of hands and handing over of keys follows at the side entrance of the community chapel. In reference to the biblical exodus, the washing of hands symbolizes the crossing of the red sea as the executive director of the NGO points out:

“The red sea could be understood as a moment of purification, since water generally in all cultures means life and cleanliness. In the absence of a real river or sea to cross, washing of hands symbolizes new life.”⁹²

⁹¹ Ate Clara is a professional hairdresser (cf. chapter 3.1).

⁹² Email of 1st April 2013.

Another explanation is given in the video documentation.

“The washing of hands of the people gives emphasis in cleansing the impurities as they begin to dwell their aspire that this village will be far different from their former habitats.”

A female resident from the community however understands the washing of hands in the following way:

“Washing of hands so that you are clean to accept and to come in the kingdom of God which He promised to the people. Why washing of hands so that you are clean to accept the key and to live here. This was a gift from God to us because we did not expect that we have it even we pay but in a lowest cost.”

The statements about the symbolic meaning of the washing of hands reveal that transferring to the housing project does not simply mean to move from one dwelling place to another, as they used to be before, but as a turning point in their life, linked with the aspiration or promise of a better future.

After receiving the keys, the *awardees* and their families enter the chapel to perform the *Panumpa*, the so-called *Pledge of Occupancy*. The *Panumpa* completes the Ritual of Transfer and presents the symbolic act through which the *awardees* and their families finally become *homepartners* and thus legal residents of the housing project. In the *Panumpa*, the communal policies set by the NGO are formulated as a code of behavior. One of the social workers reads them out aloud and the *awardees* and their spouse or partner sign them afterwards.

The *Panumpa* comprises five paragraphs summarizing the more detailed and extensive *Occupancy Rules and Deed of Restrictions*. It stipulates the following five promises. The promise

- (1) to follow the policies and laws of the community,
- (2) to be an active member,
- (3) to maintain good relationships,
- (4) to care for cleanliness in the house and within the community and
- (5) to behave and thereby be a role model.

The ritual ends with a song called *Welcome to the family* with which the residents of the housing project welcome the new families to the community.

4.2.5 GENERAL CHANGES EFFECTED BY THE SOCIALIZED HOUSING PROJECT

The move into the housing project influences the lives of the former informal settlers in many ways. Besides others, I identified three levels on which the HCD-Program has a significant impact these are:

- (1) on the level of access to a place to dwell: it is no longer social relations and cloak-and-dagger operations providing access to a certain place to dwell but a formalized Application and Selection Process. Membership in the BEC and the fulfillment of certain selection criteria are prerequisite to become eligible for this process. The Application and Selection process together with the Ritual of Transfer and the corresponding legal arrangements, transform the *beneficiaries* from illegal settlers to *homepartners* and thus to prospective *homeowners*.
- (2) on the level of collective identity: The sweat-equity work to be rendered before moving to the housing project together with the Ritual of Transfer lay the foundation for the creation of a collective identity of the housing project residents'. The sensory experiences of the sweat-equity work combined with the performance of the pilgrim dance trigger inter-subjective aesthetic experiences among the residents, which are embodied. While the sensory experience of the pilgrim dance is repeated with each Ritual of Transfer, the experiences of the sweat-equity work vary in its intensity from the first to the last batches of future residents. Nevertheless, these experiences form the basis of a collective identity of the housing project community, being renewed in each pilgrim dance.
- (3) on the level of BEC membership: In the squatter areas and dumpsite settlements membership in the BEC made a difference in the everyday squatter life. Leisure activities like leadership trainings and faith sharing with like-minded people offer a meaningful diversion. Furthermore, membership made access to scholarships for children and livelihood initiatives possible. With regard to the housing project, BEC membership became the precondition for being awarded with a housing unit. Membership and involved responsibilities and obligations changed in the housing project. The reason for this is simple. In the squatter areas, membership was first of all a leisure activity that additionally enabled its members to improve their actual living conditions and to benefit from the offered programs of the NGO. In the housing project, active membership and participation in communal meetings and activities is mandatory. It is considered the necessary condition for the creation of a new and successful community. That means, while before membership engagement mainly had individual benefits, it now aims to create benefits on a collective level in order to bring about positive change and success for the benefit of all residents.

Taking the abovementioned aspects together, it should become apparent that, with offering a safe place to dwell and with implementing a Human and Community Development Program, the NGO provides its *homepartners* a basic frame to develop an autonomous and self-supporting community. This structure however has high demands on its members. They are required

to take over responsibilities not only for individual family or household affairs but also for collective affairs for the benefit of the whole community. From this perspective it becomes obvious why I consider the socialized housing project as a *constructed community* in the sense defined by MacDougall (cf. 1999: 96-99). The residents are provided with a certain material environment and social structures, they first have to adjust and adapt to. Conversely, they are also required to fill this *construct* with life, and to give it an own shape by *collective authorship*. That means they are expected to create an own *social landscape* through active involvement in collective affairs and through appropriating the material environment in order to create the *life-world* they want to live in. This brings me to another characteristic of social landscapes, i.e. their aesthetic dimension. In the following I will describe the specific aesthetics of the socialized housing project and analyze its effects on my research partners in the transition process.

4.3 THE AESTHETICS OF THE SOCIALIZED HOUSING PROJECT

Looking at selected aesthetic elements of the housing project and specifically outlining two levels effective in the transition process, two main arguments evolve. Firstly, the values of the housing project are objectified in the buildings and infrastructure. This leads to the effect that the material environment and its qualities trigger a positive feeling of now living a better life. Therefore, I call these the *aesthetics of a better life*. Secondly, there are contradicting aesthetic features revealing the state of development of the housing project on the one hand, and the impact of policies on the other hand triggering ambivalent feelings toward the performed change of lifestyle. The ambivalent feelings cause a conflict between the vision on the one hand, and the real life in the housing project on the other hand marking a counterpart to the above-mentioned level of aesthetics. These, I therefore call the *aesthetics of ambivalence*. Both aesthetics will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5. Here, a rather general idea of how the new living conditions and especially its aesthetic qualities trigger aesthetic experiences will be developed to start with. The residents not only perceive and become aware of the different conditions of their new living environment but also experience transformations of practices, behavior and values.

4.3.1 THE AESTHETICS OF A BETTER LIFE

The vision of the socialized housing project – as already mentioned – is to offer former informal settlers a new chance in life by providing them with a new living environment in a safe neighborhood equipped with a communal infrastructure. The communal infrastructure comes with a

worship center, a multi-purpose center, a cooperation center with an office for the board of directors, a store, and a storeroom also used as workshop, a kiosk (further meeting room built in vernacular design), market stalls⁹³ and a two classroom pre-school. Furthermore, there is a basketball court situated in front of the cooperation center and a playground for children. The communal facilities objectify crucial values of the philosophy of the project in particular as well as of present Filipino culture in general. These are *education*, *cooperation* and *spirituality*. In its shape, the housing site resembles the letter L, but turned around 90°. It is divided into a communal center, located in the angle, and two residential areas, which spread from the center towards the dead-end of the two main roads of about 800m lengths. A cemented wall of three meters' height encloses the housing site, thus creating a domestic space with public and private areas. Pieces of glass on the top of the wall serve as an additional deterrent. They shall prevent potential intruders from climbing over the wall. At night, the (only) entrance situated in the public area at the head of the site, is closed with a gate and watched by local *tanuds*⁹⁴. For the residents the wall and the gated entrance play an important role for their sense of safety. They consider these measures necessary to prevent thievery and informal dwelling. Hence they have a positive effect on the residents' sense of safety. The wall contributes to the formation of a collective identity of the residents, as it clearly separates them from the scattered settlements in the neighborhood and identifies them as villagers. However, while the wall forms a collective identity of the villagers, the form of the place of residence separates the residential areas into two neighborhoods, which gives rise to group formation. The difference in the infrastructural development of both neighborhoods and the awarding process further push this effect. At first, the NGO mainly awarded houses on one of the main roads, so that most of the *new homeowners* are now residing in the second main road. This also becomes apparent in the different aesthetics of the two roads. While the first road already shows signs of appropriation in the modes of organization of the house, planted trees and flowers, etc., the second main road still looks rather abandoned. This triggers ambivalent feelings among the residents. I will return to this aspect in 5.4.

From an outsider's perspective, the wall and its gated entrance are one of the characteristic aesthetic features giving the housing project the appearance of a Filipino urban *village*, i.e. a gated-community inhabited commonly by people belonging to the (upper) middle class and above. An impression expressed by local visitors and taxi or *trisikat drivers* coming to the

⁹³ The market stalls were not yet in use at the time of my fieldwork.

⁹⁴ A *tanud* is a (local) security guard usually on the baranggay level, but also in gated communities or neighborhoods. In the housing project, there is a group of male volunteer *tanuds*. In teams of two, they guard the entrance gate during the night. The *tanuds* receive a monthly allowance. For their allowance, the cooperative monthly collects PhP 5.00 per each household. However, at the time of my fieldwork I learned that not all households are willing to give their share.

housing site for the first time. There is a further aspect in which the gated entrance makes a difference for the former informal settlers and thus becomes effective in their experience: before having moved, they experienced their dwellings and living environment as open and thus unprotected (cf. 5.1). Here, the value of safety objectifies in the material environment of the housing project. The sense of safety further improves through the absence of other phenomena as an effect of the community's code of behavior. There are two phenomena, which my research partners mentioned most often:

(1) The *absence of (male) drunkards* in public spaces as both alcohol consumption as well as drug consumption are prohibited in the housing project. The NGO considers it a measure of prevention as alcoholism is seen as a major problem in squatter and dumpsite settlements often causing conflicts and (domestic) violence.

(2) The *absence of noise* (e.g. produced by music or *videoke* from a sound system on high volume) especially at night. *Walay samok* (no noise) is how my research partners commonly called this aesthetic quality of the housing project in Cebuano. *Walay samok* is on the one hand an effect of the code of behavior stipulating resting times, i.e. disturbance of silence presents a violation of the communal policies and on the other hand the result of the financial challenges the *homepartners* face, which makes access to electricity and its consumption more difficult (cf. chapter 5.3.). Most of my research partners mentioned that at first, they felt irritated by the silence in the housing project, but that they now enjoy it because they now have a peaceful sleep. Something that seems impossible in squatter areas. This shows that the policies become perceptible in the specific sound scape of the housing project, and that they trigger a change in what the residents consider appropriate in terms of noise.

Besides the communal infrastructure and the policies involved in dwelling, it is the house itself, which triggers a feeling of living *a better life now*. From my perspective, the two main factors for this are:

(1) Because of the *materials* used for construction. This is especially an effect of concrete. My research partners associate *concrete* with the idea of wealth and safety because of its price value and its resistance and durability;

(2) Because of indoor sanitary facilities. For my research partners, having indoor sanitary facilities improve the conditions of how and where to perform cleaning practices. *Cleanliness* and *hygiene* are important for a healthy life, which presents another value of the philosophy of the housing project. They further entail a spatial shift of cleaning practices

not only from outdoors to indoors but rather from public to private space⁹⁵. That means, by providing sanitary facilities inside the house, the residents can now perform cleaning practices inside the house. This especially makes a difference with regard to bathing. The so-called *Comfort-Room* (bathroom) now enables the residents to bathe in a private setting and thus in a safe environment that offers visual privacy. The reason for this perceived merit and its further implications will be covered in chapter 5.1.

Cleanliness and *hygiene* also play an important role in the HCD-Program. Every second week, a team of German Doctors offers free medical treatment for the residents. Besides that, so-called Community Health Volunteers (CHVs) take care of mild illnesses and are in charge of the production of herbal treatments. In order to improve the healthcare services for the residents, the NGO extended the communal infrastructure with a mini-clinic to have a fixed room for medical treatment. At the time of my fieldwork, either the multi-purpose-meeting room or the chapel served for this purpose as the construction of the mini-clinic only started by the end of the year 2011.

A communal drainage system, a waste separation and recycling concept (including the vermiculture production and separated waste containers in the public area), and communal cleaning-up activities further contribute to being able to live up to these values. Most of my interview partners described the community as *limpyo* (clean) considering it important for their well-being especially in comparison with their former living conditions. Former scavengers pointed out that their children's clothing and skin now remain clean even when playing outside. Unlike before at the dumpsite settlement where they were constantly *hugaw* (dirty) because of mud and smoke.

This section shows that the NGO implements its values not only through the HCD-Program outlined before, but also through the material environment of the housing project. Objectified in buildings and infrastructure, the process of value formation is thus further realized through the interrelation between the residents and their new dwelling environment. The reason for this can be found in what Miller calls the *humility of things* (cf. 2.1.1). Although we might experience the material environment we live in rather as the backdrop of our everyday life, the things around us affect us through their affordances and constraints. Therefore, I argue that the material environment also plays an important role in the transformation process. It not only changes the mindsets of the residents (as the NGO calls it) but also their habituated practices and thus

⁹⁵ Here again it becomes apparent, that safety is a factor entangled in different levels of providing better living conditions. A further aspect involved is the clear separation of private and public space. Something not simply happening through the provided structures but what the NGO intentionally implemented as a means of protection for the residents.

their *habitus* according to Bourdieu's sense of the term. This I will outline in more detail in chapter 5.

The features described in this section focused on those aesthetic elements by which the vision of the housing project becomes perceivable. In the following, I will now concentrate on those aesthetic elements, which create – what I call – *ambivalence experiences*. *Ambivalence* refers to the time of my fieldwork, during which I gained the impression that ambivalent feelings arose towards the actual life in the housing project looking from different perspectives (that of my research partners, that of members of the NGO (like employees as well as the German funding organization) as well as my own). The reason for this seems to be a conflict between the vision on the one hand and the reality of life in the housing project on the other hand. A crucial factor for these feelings was the state of development of the project at that time, which was not yet finished. This I will outline in the following.

4.3.2 THE AESTHETICS OF AMBIVALENCE

When I conducted my fieldwork, the housing project was still in the process of construction and development including parts of the communal infrastructure as well as the final 100 housing units. The building for the bakery and the herbarium were about to be finished and the erection of the mini-clinic started in October 2011. That the housing project was still in the process of development became evident in different aspects like the unpaved roads, the missing running water supply or the installed market stalls not yet put in operation. A closer look at the conditions of buildings and sites further revealed the rather poor quality of the construction materials, which already showed signs of wear and tear, like cracks in the cemented walls, color flacking off, and holes in the corrugated sheet roofs. While some houses already showed signs of appropriation, others remained unchanged from the initial state or even showed first signs of decay. The gravel roads were not yet paved and the grids covering the drain were already broken or even missing. Taking these conditions together, the initial impression of a *fancy village* vanished and revealed its *true* state. The aesthetics of the material environment of the housing site reveals that neither the *homepartners* nor the *community*, as far as it still existed, were already able to live up to the requirements of their new living environment demanding the residents to maintain and invest in the provided structures. This e.g. shows in the modes of organization the residents apply in the process of appropriating their individual houses and the communal buildings.

The material environment of the housing project consists of new, discarded and recycled materials. While the buildings are new, the furniture is often used or second-hand. For example, a

local bank donated the benches and tables for the communal facilities. In addition, the employees of the recycling group are allowed to sort out useful furniture from the university's bulky waste for the benefit of the residents. BEC members can then either buy them or win them by raffle.

These modes of organization give form to what I call *makeshift aesthetics*. An aesthetics of *bricolage* i.e. a mixture of new and worn. This aesthetics expresses the different efforts and abilities in shaping the social landscape of the housing project and thus the different potentials of the collective authors involved. Furthermore, this aesthetics expresses the different stages of the transition of residents from illegal to legal homeowners. In chapter 5.1 I will describe and analyze the different strategies and efforts made by the residents in the design and modification of their housing units in the process of appropriation. Part of the appropriation process is to transform the foreign and unfamiliar living space provided by the NGO into a home and thus creates a living environment in which the residents feel comfortable. While most of my research partners describe their new houses at first as *hayáhay* meaning 'comfortable', they mentioned issues that have diminished this experience namely the supply of water and electricity.

Although the houses are equipped with water and power lines, the provision with water and electricity is not automatically guaranteed for different reasons. The water supply in the houses was still in the process of development due to delays in the construction of a municipal water supply system on the island. As there is no alternative water source inside the housing site (like e.g. a deep well), the residents developed different strategies to bridge the gap. This will be the topic of chapter 5.2.

The provision with electricity is of different character. Despite existing power-poles along the roads, which give the impression that the households are supplied with electricity, this is not automatically the case. The provision with electricity – depending on guaranteed availability just as water– is regulated by the *Occupancy Rules and Deeds of Restrictions*. These stipulate that the *homepartners* first have to undergo an application process supervised by the NGO and the BODs, in which they have to demonstrate their financial ability to bear not only the financial requirements for an electricity connection and the expenses for its consumption but moreover for the house. That means, in case of financial difficulties, *homepartners* are not allowed to further apply for an electricity connection at MECO (Mactan Electric Company). From the NGO's point of view this policy is part of the Human Development Program. It aims to prevent that *homepartners* overstretch their financial abilities and prioritize their financial responsibilities for the house, which can be understood as prioritizing the investment in the future instead of supposed comfort. From the *homepartners' point of view however*, this policy, which also

prohibits joint connections, is difficult to endure. This is especially the case for those households that were already used to electricity consumption in their former dwellings, like in the form of electric light or TV- and music entertainment.

Thus, the *absence of electricity* or rather its products is subject of aesthetic experiences in two respects:

- (1) Electric light becomes a social aesthetic feature making social differences between so-called *haves* and *have-nots*⁹⁶ perceptible.
- (2) *Have-nots* intensely experience the impact of communal policies on their private life and thus the consequences of the performed change of lifestyle.

Electricity consumption and its effects on managing everyday routines will be the topic of chapter 5.3. Here, I will show how the absence of electric products in general and the reasons for it, namely complying with the communal policies in particular, negatively affect the sense of satisfaction about the performed change of life style.

While the concrete house, its facilities and surroundings generally create the feeling of living a better life, the absence of water and the restricted access to electricity trigger ambivalent feelings. Both feelings arise out of comparing past and present living conditions, and thus out of their present liminal status of *being in between*: In between dwelling experiences from the past and future aspirations, while enduring the present living conditions.

Another ambivalent feeling arises when residents describe and compare the atmosphere and location of the housing project with that of their former living environment. Here, the opposing Cebuano terms *lingaw* (amused, enjoyed) and *mingaw* (*deserted, lonely*) play a central role, which I will shortly describe in the following as a third aesthetic aspect namely the *aesthetics of the absent*.

4.3.3 THE AESTHETICS OF THE ABSENT

The housing site is located in the periphery of Lapu-Lapu City on Mactan Island in between the International Airport and a tourist mile stretching along the east coast of the island. The area is rather semi-urban with scattered settlements and open fields. In the close neighborhood of the housing site are the former municipal landfill, a scrap buyer, a piggery, a tissue company and the Material Recycling Facility. The largest settlement close by is the informal dumpsite settlement stretching out in the marchlands opposite the road. The only public transportation available right at the housing site are *traysikats*, which drive passengers to the next local markets or

⁹⁶ I use the terms *haves* and *have-nots* in reference to the ethnographic study of Winther (2008) who studied the impact of electricity after its introduction in rural Zanzibar.

jeepney stops about 2 km away. The distance to the city centers of Lapu-Lapu City, Mandaue City and Cebu City is at a distance of roughly 8 to 15 km. Traveling to the city by public transportation takes between 20 to 90 Minutes depending on the traffic and destination. The residents therefore often described the atmosphere of the housing project as *mingaw* (deserted, in the sense of lifeless) or as *way lingaw* (there is nothing to enjoy, no entertainment), because of its location outside the city center and the policies e.g. restricting *videoke* and gambling. That means the absence of entertainment activities and shopping facilities. For these, they have to leave the community and go to the city. The next market is 2km away and considered by most residents *out of walking distance*. Hence, whenever the residents need to do the shopping or want to go to the city, they have to travel by public transportation, which is time and cost intensive, as most of the residents have no private vehicle. For grocery shopping they go to one of the three local markets to buy fresh food like fish, meat or vegetables. The cooperative store inside the housing project only offers basic canned foods, drinks, beverage powders, and bulk foods like rice, oil, vinegar and sugar. Besides these, they also have a small stock of drugstore products like soaps, shampoo, diapers, etc. The way, in which the cooperative store offers its products, corresponds with other local stores. Most of the products are sold in single items, offered in sachet packaging for single use or repacked in 1l bags like e.g. oil and sugar. This form of packaging suits the needs of poor consumers who often rely on daily earnings and thus usually only buy what they need and can afford in that moment. Rice is the only bulk food offered in three different kinds and bought in larger quantities, as it constitutes the main component of all meals: *A meal without rice is just a snack*. The products in the consumer store are more expensive compared to the same products offered at the local markets and cannot be bought on credit due to the cooperative system and communal policies implied. In the squatter areas there are several stores offering all kind of different products, as well as a range of fresh cooked viand, which is then sold in 1l or 2l plastic bags. Thus, people did not need to buy fresh food and to cook viand themselves. They only cooked rice and bought one or two side dishes they would like to eat. This convenience is considered as comfortable and is now missed in the housing project where not only grocery shopping presents an effort but also the cooking itself. The same applies to entertainment. Especially youths describe the atmosphere in the housing project as *way lingaw*, meaning that it is boring because there is no entertainment compared to that in the squatter settlements (cf. chapter 3). Entertainment⁹⁷ in the housing project is either a

⁹⁷ The main private entertainment activities are watching television and singing *videoke*. However, that requires an electricity connection and the necessary electric equipment, i.e. a sound system with large loudspeakers and a TV-set with DVD-player. These belong to the basic equipment also of urban poor households who used to have an electricity connection in their former habitat. Watching TV is part of the everyday amusement practices, especially in the evening hours and at the weekends. Who does not have a TV, goes to the neighbors watching through the window or the open door. *Videoke* in contrast is most often a collective activity, practiced on Saturday and

private topic (thus taking place at home) or a topic of communal activities. The latter generally only involves members, i.e. to 98% women consisting of the mothers of the households ranging from the age of about 20 to 60. All other residents like children, youths and men more or less drop out of communal activities, marking the aforementioned *gender gap*, which is a side effect of the HCD-Program. The reason for mainly women being members is because they are usually the ones who are either not employed or are only involved in informal income earning activities. Therefore, they have the time to participate and be active in the BEC. The result is that men, with few exceptions, are usually not present in communal activities or even in the communal areas except for the basketball court. Partly, this is resulting from the membership policies but also of the communal rules and the design of the communal areas. A range of typical cultural (male) activities are prohibited inside the housing project because these often involve alcohol consumption and gambling, two major reasons for domestic violence and financial difficulties of families. This motivated also the ban of raising of cocks in order to prevent illegal cockfights and gambling. The point is that the design of the housing project with its distinct communal facilities enables a range of different (accepted) social activities, while others (less socially accepted) are rather prevented or pushed outside due to the absence of facilities like a meeting house for men or *videoke* bars. In the housing project, social misconduct quickly becomes apparent and reprimanded by neighbors because of the implemented *Occupancy Rules and Deeds of Restriction*. In the squatter areas, on the contrary, the informal settlers had to endure social misconduct like music on high volume throughout the night because there were no possibilities to complain. Even though most of my research partners point out that they experience the communal policies as positive because they give orientation, they at the same time experience them as limiting their freedom to act. The absence of entertainment activities and shopping facilities further trigger ambivalent feelings towards the performed change of lifestyle.

These observations from the field form the basis for the next chapter, in which I will analyze the transition process with regard to the interrelations between the residents and their new house. In the analysis I will once again emphasize the social role of the aesthetic dimension of the housing project.

Sunday afternoon and throughout the night either to celebrate being together or on special occasions. In the housing project, *videoke* is practiced rather moderately. This is a further effect of the communal policies requiring the compliance of peace at noon and night, moderate volume and prohibits alcohol consumption.

5. CHANGING LIVES THROUGH SOCIALIZED HOUSING

Chesa: It seems as if I rose into heaven because I would have never believed that I would ever have a house this big and then that there would be something I could call my private property. Never again, there will be a month or a year that there will be automatic demolition and then where would you go. Now, here, it feels like I have a surplus of happiness, that is how I feel about living here [in the socialized housing project] and about being one of the beneficiaries [of the project] (Interview November 8, 2011, p. 15).

A safe and legal place to dwell is the main motivation for urban poor informal settlers when they apply for a housing project. Offering proper housing for urban poor is a need arising out of rapid urbanization not only in the Philippines, but also in most cities of developing countries. Offering low-cost housing is a major concern of all governments. In the Philippines, the government only fulfills this responsibility in limited form. Early relocation initiatives in the 1970s and 1980s failed because in their remote new locations the *beneficiaries* were not able to secure a livelihood. Thus many returned to the squatter areas (cf. Berner 2000: 555). Low-cost housing initiatives followed but turned out to rather address the low- or middle-income classes as they were too expensive for the poor (cf. e.g. Ballesteros 2002).⁹⁸ Therefore, private initiatives of local and/or international non-governmental organizations have become active in this field in order to provide affordable housing to the poor. The socialized housing project, within which I conducted my ethnographic fieldwork, is, as already described, one of those private initiatives. It not only offers affordable housing but also a comprehensive infrastructure to create a new self-contained community. Its major aim is to empower the residents to escape from their impoverished living conditions in order to pave the way for their children into a better future. In the previous chapter, I therefore described the socialized housing project, its background, vision, infrastructure and activities, from the perspective of the NGO. In this chapter, I will now focus on the perspective of my research partners, i.e. the perspective of the residents in order to analyze the transition process, and how it affects them and their lives. The analysis is based on the main guiding questions of the present study, namely

- (1) how my research partners *experience* the transition from an informal, marginalized, self-organized lifestyle in squatter areas and dumpsite settlements to an institutionalized and policy-based life in the socialized housing project,
- (2) how they *feel* in their new living environment,

⁹⁸ This is a general problem of housing initiatives in Third-World-Countries as pointed out by Rondinelli. He therefore suggests that governments should respond more strongly to the needs and capacities of urban poor (Rondinelli 1990).

- (3) how they *value* the performed change of lifestyle, and
- (4) how they *respond* to the new living conditions in the constructed environment of the project.

This implies the impacts of the interrelations of the residents and their new living environment on the one hand, and their entailed *ideas*, *experiences* and *feelings* on the other hand. For the analysis, I decided to concentrate on the house based on the argument that it is a humble but central social agent in the transition process. It is mainly through the daily interaction with the house – its different materials, structure and facilities – that my research partners perform the change of lifestyle and feel the differences between past and present giving rise to ideas about a possible future.

There are three materials which appeared to be significant for the transition process because they made a difference in my research partners past and present dwelling experiences. These are concrete, water and electricity. In modern dwelling concepts, concrete, water and electricity are nowadays already taken for granted materials and resources. People are not aware of their involvement in daily routines and the effects they produce. For my research partners on the contrary they make a difference in their new dwelling experiences. The reason for this is, firstly, (with regard to concrete) that before, they used to live in a house made of light materials, and secondly, (with regard to water), they had no indoor sanitary facilities. The third reason (with regard to water and electricity) is connected with the state of the water supply system on the one hand, and the policies regulating the water and electricity supply on the other hand. As I will show, these circumstances produce the effect that water and electricity are either experienced as *scarce* and *expensive* or as *absent*. From a theoretical point of view, the materials concrete, water and electricity are furthermore interesting as they present a research gap within material culture studies. For a better understanding of the specific interrelationship of people and their dwelling environment, I will draw on concepts from anthropology of the house. In the following I will briefly outline the most relevant concepts for the present book.

The Anthropology of the House

“In a great many cultures the dwelling is the largest artifact that a man, a woman, or their family may ever construct; in many others it is the single most important item that they may ever call their own; in some it is also the most expensive, most costly investment; as purchase or as rent, that they will ever make in their lives. But the dwelling is more than the materials from which it is made, the labour that has gone into its construction, or the time and money that may have been expended on it: the dwelling is the theater of our lives, where the major dramas of birth and death, of procreation and recreation, of labour and of being in labour are played out and in which a succession or scenes of daily lives is perpetually enacted” (Oliver 1990: 15).

The house, as the British architectural historian Paul Oliver points out, plays a crucial role in the *lifeworld* of human beings. It is the place where people live their lives. Two specific characteristics of houses within the field of cultural objects are their longevity and their association with the settlement in which and the land on which they are built. These specific characteristics have a crucial impact on the people who built the house and the families living in it, sometimes for generations (cf. Oliver 1990: 10). Oliver therefore applies the broader term *dwelling*, as it implies the double significance of the *artefact* and the *process*. “It is the process of living at a location and it is the physical expression of doing so” (ibid.: 7). This double significance has a crucial impact on the relationship between people and their houses. Dwellings might vary from depressions or rough shelters made of locally available organic materials like grass, wood and leaves to massive structures made of steel and concrete. But what matters to people is not only the place of the structure but the bond between them and their house. Here, Oliver refers to the intimate link between the house and the human body. “[A]s the soul is more than the body that contains it; for untold millions of people the bond between themselves and their dwelling-place transcends the physical limitations of their habitation” (ibid.). This bond between people and their dwelling is the subject of anthropology of the house.

The anthropology of the house is a sub-discipline of material culture studies that has long been neglected within the discipline. In early research, anthropologists mainly used to consider the house in terms of its cosmological or symbolic cultural values only, with a focus on traditional rural dwellings in South-East Asia, Africa or South America (cf. e.g. Sparkes and Howell 2003; Waterson 2009). Architectural and aesthetic aspects, in contrast, have been left to be studied by architects and artists. Since Bourdieu’s work about the Kabyle house (1970), the house has been considered a prime agent of socialization. As e.g. Carsten and Hugh-Hones point out

“[t]he house and the body are intimately linked. The house is an extension of the person; like an extra skin, carapace or second layer of clothes, it serves much to reveal and display as it does to hide and protect. House, body and mind are in continuous interaction, the physical structure, furnishing, social conventions and mental images of the house at once enabling, moulding, informing and constraining the activities and ideas, which unfold within its bounds. A ready-made environment fashioned by a previous generation and lived in long before it becomes an object of thought, the house is a prime agent of socialization” (Carsten and Hugh-Jones, 1995: 2).

The house shapes its residents as much as they shape it. Everywhere in the world, people build houses and give them their own shape in a wide range of different places. For some, these places might not seem appropriate, e.g. because of extreme climatic or other environmental conditions; for others, they might be the only place available for them to dwell. As we have seen in the chapters before, for my research partners this was a squatter area in an urban niche or even the dumpsite. The house is part of their identity. This became especially obvious in the life stories of Ate Lorna (cf. chapter 3.2) and Ate Janis (cf. chapter 3.5), who feel intimately linked to their former dwellings in the squatter area and dumpsite settlement. Their former houses embody their respective family histories, and in the case of Ate Lorna it is even a memento of her husband and what they accomplished since leaving the province.

Contemporary research moreover analyses changes occurring in the transition from traditional to modern forms of dwelling as a result of globalization, with a focus on consumption practices. To be mentioned here are for example the works of Thomas (1998) and Wilhite (2008). Both outline social and cultural effects produced by the introduction of concrete as main building material. Taking the example of Madagascar, Thomas shows in his article "Conspicuous Consumption" (1998) that a change occurs in the objectification of status. While it used to be a matter of rank in the past, it has become a matter of economic wealth since the end of the 19th century. In "The Transformation of Everyday Life" (2008), Wilhite points out that the introduction of concrete triggers a series of changes at the level of social interaction and use of private and public space. He argues that the thermal quality of concrete not only promotes but also necessitates the use of air conditioning systems. Conversely, the introduction of air conditioning systems has led to an increasing shift in social life from the street to the home, changing social interaction between neighbors on the one hand and the use of private and public space on the other. Another interesting ethnography is that of Winther (2008), who describes how everyday life changes in rural Zanzibar through the introduction of electricity. Furthermore, anthropologists are more and more interested in modern dwelling practices. Miller (1990) examined modes of organization and appropriation of state-provided houses in London. Shove conducted research on the use of household appliances (Shove 2003) and Pink (2004) studied how gender roles are performed within the private world of the house. Taking the example of Cuba, Del Real and Pertierra examined how residents in Cuban cities develop practices and ideas to adapt their housing within the specific politico-economic conditions of the post-Soviet era (2008).

In contrast to other aspects of everyday life, anthropologists show a rather low interest in the house. Following Carsten and Hugh-Jones, the reason for this seems to be the fact that anthropologists take the house for granted. “Like our bodies, the houses in which we live are so commonplace, so familiar, so much part of the way things are, that we often hardly seem to notice them” (ibid.: 3-4). Cieraad further argues that it is precisely this supposed self-evidence of our domestic surroundings that prevents us from asking obvious questions about home-related practices, like what are reasons for covering surfaces inside the house, or for decorating and segregating practices, etc. in the domestic space (cf. Cieraad 1999). That anthropologists are not particularly interested in the house and practices involved in dwelling seems somewhat surprising considering the fact that the house is often the first place where anthropologist encounter the culture they aim to study, as Carsten and Hugh-Jones have emphasized:

“To enter another culture is to stand nervously in front of an alien house and to step inside a world of unfamiliar objects and strange people, a maze of spatial conventions whose invisible lines get easily scuffed and trampled by ignorant foreign feet. But these first revealing, architectural impressions, reinforced by the painful process of learning who is who, who and what lives where, and what to do where and when, soon fade to the background to become merely the context and environment for the increasingly abstract and wordy conversation of ethnographic research” (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995: 3).

What becomes apparent in this statement is that even though the house plays a central role in the ethnographic learning process, its relevance for it is generally ignored. Thereby, it is the house and how its residents interact with it from which the anthropologist can learn modes of social orders, cultural norms and ideas about the world. For the present study, it was actually the model house together with the house of Ate Lorna, through which I entered the field and learned about what it means to live in the housing project.

These theoretical considerations now provide the starting point for analyzing the transition process focusing on the interrelation of the residents and the new house as well as the resulting effects, i.e. the implicit mutual shaping processes.

5.1 CONCRETE: THE PROMISES OF A NICE HOUSE IN PROPER CONDITIONS

Ate Lorna: I'm happy that I now have a proper house, I tried hard to achieve a house so that my children finally can live in clear conditions. Now my habitation looks formal. It is nice. [...].

There it is nicer [squatter settlement], everything is close really, but what I was thinking of was about the house, I wouldn't have been able to build a house like these... (all laughing) ... with jalousie windows, made of concrete. I couldn't even afford to buy 1 kilo of cement. (laughing) Life there is vivid and full of energy but your house is rather ugly. The only reason of living here is to live in a nice house for my children. (Interview November 15, 2011, p. 33; p. 42).

A nice house in proper conditions – that is not only what Ate Lorna was striving for, when she applied for the housing project, but also what the majority of my research partners – with few exceptions – expressed in our conversations. But what does actually characterize *a nice house in proper conditions*? In the following, I will approach this question starting by describing the structure of the houses as well as general modes of organization and interior design, which prove to be typical for the phase of transition. I will take the model house, where I stayed during my fieldwork, as an object of comparison to show that the applied modes of organization reflect the respective state of transition of the residents.

Second, I will take the example of the bathroom – called *Comfort Room* – to describe and analyze the changing lifestyle by indoor sanitary facilities. Here, effects on everyday practices produced by the house and where these are performed will be subject of the analysis in order to highlight the meaning of ‘a nice house in proper conditions’. This chapter is the first approach to analyze the role of the house with regard to the question of how it becomes effective in the process of performing a change of lifestyle.

In a third step, I will discuss the effects the *aesthetics of concrete* have on the residents. This chapter will underline my main argument that the residents experience the effects of change of lifestyle most intensely in the daily interaction with the new material environment of the socialized housing project through *aesthetic experiences*, in which the people shift in temporal horizons between past and present experiences and future anticipations.

5.1.1 APPROPRIATING THE HOUSE

The day the residents move into their awarded houses, they all start their new life on the same material basis as provided by the NGO, i.e. the houses are in shell condition. The NGO leaves the further development and interior design to the residents so that they can shape it in accordance with their needs and ideas instead of providing them with a predesigned and furnished home. The underlying idea is to involve the residents in the process of developing and shaping the housing site and thus to invest in their future. The way in which the residents appropriate their house, however, differs for certain reasons. As already pointed out, the residents face a

range of different challenges in the process of adjusting to the new living conditions, like the communal policies, the different responsibilities and most of all economic survival. Some are affected more by these challenges, others less. That there are differences in dealing with these challenges shows in the residents' modes of organization. They create perceivable social differences between neighbors, who at first appeared to be *equal*, and thus reveal their different states of transition. For the analysis, I distinguish between two modes of organization: *makeshift aesthetics* and the *aesthetics of persistence*. I consider these two characteristic, first for the phase of adapting to the new house, and second for the phase of appropriating the house. These two phases address the mutual shaping process active in the interrelationship between the residents and their new house. I argue that in the phase of adaptation, the house produces stronger effects on shaping the residents. This shifts in the phase of appropriation. In this latter phase, the residents produce stronger effects on the house by shaping it in accordance with their dwelling needs and ideas of comfort. Furthermore, they highlight the underlying process of transformation of habituated modes of organization.

For a better understanding of applied modes of organization and patterns of design, I will first describe the condition of the house at the point of time when the residents move in. Afterwards I will describe the interior design of the so-called model house, which serves as a show room for applicants and as such as a source of ideas for the residents. I will underline the general descriptions with short field impressions and two case examples in order to highlight those aspects which affect the applied modes of organization.

Form and Structure of the Housing Units

The residents of the housing project are provided with houses in shell condition. The houses are designed as square-shaped dwellings with a bathroom and a kitchen area located at the backside of the unit. The side walls, the flooring and the lower third of the front and back walls are made of concrete. The upper two thirds of the front and back wall are made of plywood. The height of the house and a cemented middle beam halfway up the ceiling allow the installation of a second floor to enlarge the living area. Five windows – a small one in the bathroom and two window fronts in the lower and upper part – serve as light sources and for ventilation. They are fitted with aluminum milk glass louvers. Two (lockable) doors – one on the front and one on the back – provide access to the house. The ground floor area is approximately 30qm. The only separated room in the house is the comfort room (bathroom), called CR. It is about 2qm and has no ceiling, unless there is a second floor. The CR is situated opposite the entrance door and consists of a pre-installed toilet bowl (without toilet tank) and a showerhead in the

wall. Beside the CR is the kitchen area. It consists of a cemented work surface with an embedded sink. As it is the only sink in the house, it serves the full range of food-related and personal cleanliness needs. The sanitary facilities of the houses are connected to the communal drainage system. Furthermore, each unit is provided with pre-installed electric wiring with power outlets, lamp sockets (in the CR and main room), light switches and a fuse box. The holder for the electric meter is fitted outside the house besides the entrance door.⁹⁹ The sloping roof, descending from the back to the front side, is covered with corrugated sheet metal. Outside, it is provided with rain gutters and a downpipe at the front side of the house.

As already mentioned, the housing units are built in rows of two to five units. While form, structure and facilities of each unit are the same, the units can vary regarding the position of the entrance door and thus of the inner position of CR and kitchen area. Entrance door and CR are always on the side adjacent to the next house. Thus, the entrance doors of two units are always next to each other. The area of one meter in front and one meter behind each house also belongs to each unit. From this stage of construction, it is up to the residents' efforts to individually design and furnish the house in order to transform it into their personal home. The so-called model house, that I stayed in during my fieldwork, gives an example for possible structural alterations and patterns of interior design. Therefore, I will briefly describe the interior design of the model house to better understand applied modes of organizations of my research partners.

The Model House

Applicants of the project get a first impression of the housing concept by visiting the model house. In the first project phase, the NGO employees set up their field office there until their office in the multipurpose building was finished. In contrast to the awarded units, the interior of the model house is already (simply) designed. It has a second floor and thus a second room built above the CR and kitchen area enabling a separation of living and sleeping. Inside, the wooden walls are covered with plywood and the ceilings with white ceiling tiles, so that the skeleton and the electric wirings of the house are hidden. A curved staircase with a carved wooden handrail leads to the second floor. A cabinet fills the space underneath the staircase. Further cabinets are installed in the open space underneath the cemented work surface in the kitchen area. Additionally, there is a bookshelf at the sidewall of the kitchen area under the

⁹⁹ Winther described that in rural Zanzibar, the electric meter is located inside the house in the room by the entrance door, which makes it necessary for the employee of the governmental utility company to enter the house to read the meter once a month. As a government employee, s/he is entitled to enter private space without asking permission of the residents, which strongly contradicts local customs and affects conflicts (cf. Winther 2008: 109). As the meter is located outside the house in this housing project, the residents do not really get in touch with the employee of the utility company.

staircase. The surfaces are painted: the walls in bright yellow and the front and back door as well as the doors of the cabinets in light green. The bright colors create a friendly atmosphere inside. On the outside, the window fronts are fitted with wrought-iron grills (as it is the case for the other communal buildings, too) as a means of protection against burglary because the glass lamellas can easily be removed. The interior design of the model house usually excites admiration from visitors and neighbors. Only at second glance and when taking a closer look, the model house already shows signs of wear and tear resulting from its past use and from the climatic conditions revealing the poor quality of the building materials. I will return to this aspect later on. In the next section, I will describe the modes of organization common in the initial phase of *settling in* after the Ritual of Transfer. Afterwards, I will describe common modes of organization, which are characteristic for the phase of adapting to the predetermined structure and areas of action of the house.

Settling in

The day the *homepartners* and their families move into their new houses after completing the Ritual of Transfer, they only bring a few belongings, mainly household items like sleeping and cooking utensils, main nutrition like rice, as well as buckets and clothes. All other possession they seem to transfer bit by bit when a transportation vehicle is available, as they do not have their own vehicle. It also depends on what they intend to do with their former dwelling: whether family members remain there or whether they destroy it (as it is the aim of the NGO). Some residents sell their former informal dwelling, others rent it out. The latter, however, contradicts with the idea of the NGO to relocate informal settlers and hence contribute to ending informal dwelling. Another factor for transferring certain belongings from the former dwelling is an electricity connection (cf. chapter 5.3.).

On August 8, 2011, I participated in the fifth the Ritual of Transfer since the formation of the housing project. The day after the ritual, I visited the awarded families and took pictures of their new houses for the NGO.¹⁰⁰ From the outside, the houses still looked unoccupied. They belong to those last one hundred units which had just been completed in the month before. The outside walls were not yet painted. There were no plants outside. A fireplace for cooking was still missing, likewise containers for collecting rainwater from the downpipe. These elements are typical exterior indicators showing that a house is occupied. They are part of the specific social aesthetics of the housing project showing first signs of appropriation through the residents.

¹⁰⁰ The NGO asked me if I could take pictures of the new beneficiaries and their units as testimonies for the private funder who paid for the construction of the last one hundred housing units.

Inside, the houses varied from rather empty to scarcely furnished. What they all had in common were kitchen utensils like pots and pans, a washing bowl and a plastic draining rack as well as sleeping utensils. In every house there was a different feature that caught my attention. One time, there were three upholstered armchairs and a motorcycle. The other time, it was the baby, who had just been born in the new family home, two nights after the Ritual of Transfer. The next family I visited had already lived in the housing project for a couple of months but – as an exception – had just participated in the Ritual of Transfer. That is why their house was already arranged with furniture in the kitchen and living area. The CR-wall was decorated with family pictures and posters from pre-school. A curtain served as room divider separating the kitchen area from the living area. In the next house, my attention was drawn by the emptiness because of the missing furniture on the one hand and the already installed family altar on the other. The altar was a square wooden board fixed on the CR-wall equipped with different religious items: two yellow blossoms and two thin white candles, which were in use during the Ritual of Transfer; a palm leaf cross, a post card of a drawing of Mother Mary with a rosary put around, a little figure of Santo Niño, another rosary and four plastic cups. One cup was filled with sugar to guarantee sweet relations and harmony in the family, one with water to guarantee cool air in the house, one with money and one with rice to guarantee that they never run out of it. All objects were set up to ensure the well-being of the residents. They were said to have a positive influence on the social relations and the atmosphere in the house. This, the homeowner was told by a neighbor who learned it from the Sisters of the Sacred Heart when she was preparing for the housing project. The house of the last family which I visited was still completely empty except for a bicycle standing in front of the house. The husband was the only family member that had already transferred to the housing project because he was employed in the newly opened bakery and hence had to start working at 3 am. His wife and children decided to stay in their former dwelling until they were allowed to apply for an electricity connection.

Seeing all these families and their different styles of living, I realized that what all had in common was the presence of some kind of religious items – either in the form of a family altar at the CR-wall facing the entrance door or other religious items like palm leaf crosses fixed outside the entrance door and/or above the family altar. Religious objects and symbols inside and outside the house are very important for the people's sense of safety and well-being. They grow out of their belief in the mercy of God and that He will always provide for them. That is why most of my research partners consider their new house as a *gift of God*. In the next section I outline the second mode of organization, which I find characteristic for the phase of *adapting to the house*, starting with the cooking and cleaning area.

Adapting to the House

The formal structure of the houses suggests the following mode of spatial organization: The back part of the house is designed for cleaning and cooking practices. The indoor sanitary facilities enable the residents to perform cleaning practices like body hygiene or dish-washing inside the house, either in the CR or at the sink in the kitchen area, whereas washing clothes is generally performed outside – either behind or in front of the house, alone or alongside other neighbors. At the time of my fieldwork, only one of my research partners had a (simple) washing machine.¹⁰¹ All others washed their laundry by hand using plastic washing pans, a washboard or hand brush, and curd soap.

The soap used for washing clothes became a social marker between my neighbors and me. While my direct neighbors used the cheap curd soap that can be used for many purposes and is long lasting, I bought laundry detergent without thinking because that is what I use at home. However, in contrast to curd soap, which is sold in the cooperative store, laundry detergent is only sold in a supermarket, where my neighbors usually did not do their shopping. On top of that it is more expensive and has fragrance. Insofar, the social aesthetics of the soap mattered to my neighbors, because it was another agent making the social differences between us perceivable through smell. Something my neighbors noticed and commented on right away: ‘mhhh humut ang imong sinina’ meaning ‘mhhh, your clothing smells good’.

Besides cleaning, the kitchen area is used to prepare the food. Several households have extended the kitchen area by constructing an *abuhan*, a fireplace used for cooking. While in traditional and informal dwellings it is placed inside the house, in the housing project people set it up in their backyard. It is built on piles and has a roof. The ground of the fireplace is covered with soil or stone. My research partners used scrap wood as building materials. It also serves as firewood, together with plastics (like from sandals) because it offers a (cheap) alternative to charcoal and especially gas. However, it produces soot traces on cooking pots and on the outside façade of the house.

Cooking on fire is a common practice in rural and urban poor households. The use of scrap wood, which sometimes is also varnished, and plastics has severe impacts on air quality. Especially in the early morning and evening hours, the air is filled with smoke coming from fireplaces in the area. Every morning around six o'clock smoke from the dirty kitchen of my neighbors came into my house through the open lamella windows, which actually were open to let fresh air flow in. Instead, the smoke stuck inside the main room giving me a hard time to breathe. However, cooking with wood is cheaper compared with other burning materials like charcoal or gas, whereas charcoal is also preferred to gas. Here, the principle of ‘living out of the pocket’ and sachet-economy becomes evident, namely that both firewood and charcoal can be purchased in single-use packs. Moreover, firewood has the advantage that people can gather it for free in the surroundings. Gas, in contrast, has to be purchased in a 5kg bottle. Thus, from the perspective of my research partners gas is more expensive. Furthermore, it is not offered by the cooperative store but only at the markets which are about 2 to 4 km away. Hence, the acquisition of gas means not only extra financial effort but also time and the need for a means of transportation, which in turn may also cause extra costs. From the perspective of ‘living out of the pocket’, the fact that a bottle of gas lasts for weeks while firewood or charcoal

¹⁰¹ I call my research partner’s washing machine simple because it only performed the washing process but not the rinsing and draining.

has to be purchased more frequently is less decisive because they compare the price for the items and not for the actual quantities.

Besides for cooking, the area behind the house is further used for storing garbage and recyclables out of sight. Some residents have fenced this area as a means of safety and demarcation. It shall not only keep potential thieves outside, but also children from the neighborhood who consider these areas as their hidden playgrounds and sometimes secretly take residents' stored recyclables.

Nanay Corazon: [...] it's just that the children sometimes take it. [...] But since Nanita put a fence it stopped. Now it's safe. (Interview November 8, 2011, p. 37).

In 2011, at the time of my fieldwork, the fences were for the most part makeshifts made of wooden planks or bamboo sticks as temporal solutions. A concrete wall offers a more stable and permanent solution. These became more common in the years after my stay in the housing project, not only behind the house but more often in front of it, sometimes further fitted with an iron grill. This development is interesting for three reasons:

- (1) It shows the transition from *modes of adaptation* to *modes of appropriation*. In this process, the former collective exterior look of the house is altered and given an individual shape.
- (2) Walls and fences in front of and behind the house concretely mark the outside space belonging to one's house and at the same time separate one's private area from that of the bordering houses.
- (3) Through fencing the outside area of the house, the residents express their need for safety and protection, which is objectified in the different kinds of fences. This is interesting insofar as, even though my research partners said that their sense of safety had been improved by the concrete house, it still did not seem to be sufficiently satisfied.

This reveals that the process of a changing lifestyle becomes perceivable in the social aesthetics of the houses. Those residents who manage to economically improve their lifestyle also accumulate more material wealth within the house, which then creates a heightened need to protect one's belongings against the outside world. It also shows how the dwelling needs of the residents shift in the process of a changing lifestyle. While at the time of transfer their need for safety and protection was triggered by a loss of their existential belongings through natural forces, it now shifts more strongly towards fears caused by the risk of human forces. But this is already an anticipation of future developments. As next step, I will analyze two modes of interior organization, focusing on the multipurpose living area.

The front part of the house is used as living area during the day and – as long as there is no second floor – as sleeping area during the night. The space between the entrance door and the CR is commonly used as an *open* or rather *semi-private* area inside the house. During the day and when the residents are at home, they usually keep the entrance door and the lamella windows open to let air flow and to interact with neighbors and passers-by. This area is also the place where the residents usually place a plank bed or sofa, which serves as seating during the day and as bed at night. Here, visitors can enter the house without disturbing the privacy.

When a visitor arrives, s/he announces his/her arrival by calling out ‘*ayo ayo, naay tawo?*’ meaning ‘Hello, is anybody at home?’.¹⁰² Visitors having only a short request usually remain in the doorway or speak with the person inside the house through the open window. The open window or open door also serves as *look-in* for neighbors, especially children to co-watch TV in case a household has an electricity connection and the necessary electronic equipment.

The CR-wall opposite the entrance is commonly the place for setting up an altar, framed pictures,¹⁰³ certificates, and various kinds of awards like school awards in form of ribbons. The *explicit reason* mentioned by my research partners for this is a *practical* one, i.e. because the CR-wall is made of wood. Thus, things can be more easily installed compared to the cemented side walls. The second and, as I would argue, more important *implicit reason* is an *aesthetic* one, namely the good visibility to the outside world. The CR-wall faces the entrance door. Hence, it is an eye-catcher catching the first attention of visitors and family members entering the house and also of passers-by when the door is open. In case a household has a TV set or a sound system, it is also often situated here. Therefore, I argue that the objects placed on the CR-wall and in the entrance area are a material objectification exhibiting social and educational achievements of family and household members. In combination with the family altar, it is the central place for social representation and religious practices.

If the residents do not (yet) have a second floor, the living area is transformed into a sleeping area in the evening. To create temporary separated sleeping rooms and thus create some privacy for parents and children, people install curtains under the ceiling as temporary room dividers. The plank beds that serve as seating during the day are now used for sleeping. The parents usually sleep on the plank beds while children sleep on the floor huddled together on a *banig* or foam mattress.

From Ate Hilda I learned that married couples sleep in a separated area. She lives together with her husband, her married daughter with her husband and their two children (her grandchildren)

¹⁰² Doorbells nowadays replace this traditional practice.

¹⁰³ Framed pictures commonly depict special events like graduations and weddings. At these events, pictures are taken by professional photographers and can be purchased afterwards.

and two unmarried children. Her married daughter and her husband sleep in a separated area, while the remaining family members sleep on the ground close beside each other on a banig.

Here, the multi-purpose character of the living area becomes evident. This alters with the installation of a second floor by which the living area is enlarged because the sleeping area is transferred upstairs. Constructing a second floor enables the residents to separate the living and sleeping areas. Both lose their temporary character and become designated areas in the house producing a clear demarcation of a purely private area in the house, which generally only household or family members enter and use. The living area, in contrast, is rather a semi-private area. It is accessible to visitors as well as the *outside gaze*. This becomes evident in the following statement of Ate Lorna.

Ate Lorna: When you come inside there is something like a cabinet and I set up a piece of plywood so that when you change clothes you cannot be seen. [...] (laughing) before we used to change clothes here where the bed is, but then when you changed clothes you could be seen from outside, yes really, therefore I changed it, I put the plywood there at the CR as division to have a place where you can change clothes without being seen. (laughing) well that's how I do it. [...] I did it on my own because I'm alone... (laughing) I carried the cabinet, pulled it, looked how it looked like, put it back and carried the plywood over there because it was first there at the window front. Then I carried it over there again close to the CR! Halla! I fixed it with nails, stepped on a chair and fixed it ... (laughing) ... I used the plywood that I used as divider before to make it look like a room, that nobody could see when I sleep and also for changing clothes, but sometimes I forgot to close the blinds. Inday would remind me: Ma please shut the blinds! Therefore, I changed it so that you ... when changing clothes I made this temporary room. (Interview November 15, 2011, p. 34).

For Ate Lorna, the possibility to look inside the house became a nuisance when changing clothes or taking a nap during the day. Thus, she installed *privacy screens* using a piece of plywood and a cabinet.

The given examples show that the modes of organization applied in the phase of adapting to the house have in common that space and things are used in multiple ways and mainly present temporary solutions. They resemble those modes of organization which my research partners also applied in their former dwellings. Plank beds change their function dependent on the day-time, either serving for seating or sleeping. Wardrobes and shelves are not only used for storing clothes and other belongings but as room dividers to create intimate space and visual privacy within the living area. Those households who lack wardrobes use large cartons for the storing of clothes. Curtains also have multiple functions. They are installed on windows as decoration to create a cozy atmosphere inside the house. Furthermore, they are used to create separated sleeping areas for parents and children and to hide storage areas like the open space under the cemented sink from sight. Clotheslines, hangers and draining racks serve at the same time for draining and storing.

Summing up, the multipurpose usage of space, furniture and of household items objectifies the *state of transition* of the respective households:

- (1) It shows that the residents are still in the process of adapting to the new environment and its conditions, arranging their personal needs in accordance to the affordances and constraints set by the house and their belongings.
- (2) The example of the multipurpose living room highlights that, as long as there is no second floor, the residents produce temporal areas of action and privacy with the help of furniture or curtains and thus by a daily active engagement with modes of organization.
- (3) The residents' state of transition also becomes evident in the *homepartners'* attitudes towards repairing and maintaining the provided shell-condition. While they are willing to invest into structural alterations (as far as they have the money to do so) – like the construction of a second floor, the installation of a roof over the entrance, or the installation of mosquito screens on windows and doors – they expect the NGO to take care of damages of provided facilities and materials.

These findings lead me to the argument that the residents' attitude towards their house is reflected in the aesthetics and thus in the design of the house, objectifying whether the residents already regard themselves as the future *homeowners* or still only as *tenants*. I therefore argue that the applied modes of organization become an indicator for the residents' state of transition and identification with their house. From this point of view, the construction of a second floor e.g. becomes one of the critical indicators for the transition from the phase of adaptation to the phase of appropriation, in which the residents begin to give their house an individual shape that satisfies their dwelling needs.

Comparing the modes of organization applied in the phase of adaptation with those Miller described in his article “Appropriating the State on the Council Estate” (1988), parallels show between the residents of the housing project and the tenants on a London Council Estate. Miller calls this mode of organization *bricolage* and *cover-up aesthetics*. He interprets these aesthetics in the context of the nature of social relations and considers the applied modes of organizations of his research partners as the material objectification of their social relations. With regard to the housing project, I call the organizational forms used in the phase of adaptation to the newly built material environment *makeshift aesthetics*. In my view, this term is better suited to the context of this research as it highlights more strongly that the residents are still in a phase of orientation in and temporary optimization of the material environment built and provided by the NGO.

In terms of the applied modes of organization, I learned that the different consumption strategies of my research partners are becoming a decisive fact in the transition process, as they either enable them or limit them in changing the shell condition of their house. I became aware of this through the accounts of Ate Janis.

A strategy of Acquiring Building Materials

During my stay in the field, I noticed that some households already managed to give their house an individual shape inside and some also outside, while those of others remained rather unchanged. At first, I thought that this would be a connection between modes of organization and the duration of living in the housing project, meaning the longer a family lived in the housing project the more they individually shaped their house by structural alterations and interior design etc. This was most often the case with houses of those families who moved in with the last batch in April 2011. The houses of those residents who moved in with the first batch in October 2008, in contrast, were far more furnished and designed. Then, however, I noticed that there are households which made larger changes in their houses even though they had just recently moved in, while the houses of others appeared rather empty even though they had already been living in the housing project for years. The connection between modes of organization and the state of development thus seems to be more complex. On first sight, the financial challenges involved in participating in the housing project present a crucial factor as they affect the residents' capacity to purchase consumer goods like building materials. I gained the impression that most of the residents now set great value to buying new building materials while before they would also have used discarded materials to build or repair their informal dwellings. Thus, those households with only small financial means commonly needed longer to alter the structure of the house. This, however, was not always the case, as I learned from Ate Janis. She and her husband relatively quickly altered the structure of their house – like the construction of a second floor – only eight weeks after they transferred and without spending money for building materials. In the following statement, she outlines her consumption strategy:

Ate Janis: [We got the materials] from the dumpsite in Umapad [...] so we don't have to buy because the expenses are big. Ouch, so better not! As long as we can get things from there our only expenses is the labor because otherwise it is very expensive. [...] We collected them there from SM¹⁰⁴ and then brought them to our place in Umapad to dump it there. So we sorted out the things we could still use for us like wood, and then we brought it here. There was plywood, that's what we brought here.

Lori: Your house is nice, the second floor is big.

Mel: Yes, I also like the outside of your house.

Ate Janis: Yes, because you know otherwise it's muddy, right? It is very muddy if you don't put cement there at the outside. The weed gets very high, right?

¹⁰⁴ SM is a supermall in Metro Cebu.

Lori: Didn't [the social worker] and her colleagues ask what you did there outside?
Ate Janis: Yes, but no, they saw what we did.
Lori: Because others have been called by [the social worker].
M: You are not allowed to make it?
Lori: You need a permission for it, Mel.
Ate Janis: In my case, I already asked permission in advance because like Susan, theirs is big, I went to her and asked her for the measurements. Thus, we asked in advance if the size would be ok, and it was ok. [...]
Mel: Do you also plan to put a small fence or not?
Ate Janis: Yes, I would like an iron one. But so far it's just our plan.
Mel: Do you have a dirty kitchen?
Ate Janis: I think of making a very small one, there besides that of Michelle just for in case we suddenly ran out of gas, you get crazy if you have to buy him [stove] food when it subsides, therefore it is my plan to make a small one at the side.
Mel: Do you need permission for making a dirty kitchen?
Ate Janis: You just have to write it down and give it to them. It was not on the list I gave them before, I mean that I want to make a dirty kitchen at the side.
Lori: Ah, so you have first to indicate what you would like to change?
Ate Janis: Yes, you write everything down, I wrote that I would construct a second floor, then that I would repair the door lock of the door. Then if you want to install tiles, you just list everything. Then, whenever you want to change something, you don't have to always write a letter. You just write everything down even though you might not yet be able to afford it.
Mel: Did you paint the wall?
Ate Janis: Not yet, but it's our plan.
Mel: What color would you like?
Ate Janis: I'm not yet sure because I have green paint; my son brought it along, a whole bucket.
Lori: That's a lot.
Ate Janis: Yes I know, I said, shall we paint the wall with it? White is nice because then the house is bright at night. I would like white but it quickly gets dirty. If green your house seems dark, isn't it? But, I also like yellow because it also seems very bright.
(Interview December 8, 2011, pp. 33-35).

In this part of the interview, Ate Janis describes how they organized and designed the house after moving in and what they would like to change next. Her modes of organization reflect those common for the housing project. Apart from the construction of a second floor and a dirty kitchen, these include the installation of tiles, the construction of a fence, preferably with iron grill, and the coloring of walls. Her accounts furthermore reveal how she connotes different colors. She prefers green to white because white is bright at night. Brightness at night reflects an important dwelling need of the residents as will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5.3. Besides this, Ate Janis explains why they were able to alter the structure of the house only shortly after they transferred. The reason is that they have continued to pursue their habituated consumption strategies common for scavengers even though they no longer live on the dumpsite. As we learned in chapter 3.5, constructing a second floor was important for Ate Janis, not only to improve the sleeping comfort of her children but also as a means of protection from sickness. Scrap materials enable the family to alter the provided structure of the house and to adjust it to their needs right away. Here, it becomes evident why they consider scavenging an advantage in their life. They see it not as a limitation but rather as an opportunity that

- (1) offered them a way to secure their existence in the city;
- (2) turned out to be the prerequisite for becoming a *beneficiary* of the housing project;

(3) enables them to appropriate their house only shortly after moving in without financial costs involved.

Besides these practical aspects, the conversation with Ate Janis shows that appropriating the house is not only a matter of how to acquire building materials but also of compliant behavior as it has to be in accordance with the *Occupancy Rules and Deeds of Restrictions* as already mentioned further above. As mentioned by Ate Janis, there are different strategies in announcing intended changes. While she listed all intended changes in an initial proposal, others first ask for permission when they have the money to make any kind of changes. Ate Janis points out that the latter procedure seems to rather cause problems, especially in case residents start constructions without waiting for the approval. The other problematic case is when residents unexpectedly have money available, e.g. to build a second floor, but have not yet received the approval of the organization or community association. Thus they have to wait. By the time the approval arrives, the money, however, has often already been spent. This has much to do with the way (urban) poor manage their money, which I have already described by 'living out of the pocket'. Keeping funds is difficult without a bank account and when facing daily existential needs.

Asking permission for the alteration of the house presents a crucial difference for the residents. In their former informal lifestyle, there was usually a certain scope for actions and a scope for interpretation of what is considered a violation of rules. Dwellings in squatter areas and dumpsite settlements are set up without asking permission, at least if it is government-owned. Sometimes, they ask neighboring settlers for advice where to set up the dwelling. Ate Rosa e.g. explained that once they set up their dwelling at night in the hope that the security guard would not notice it before the other morning and then just tolerate it. In the housing project, the situation is quite different. Here, attention is paid to compliance and violations are usually not tolerated but prosecuted by the NGO employees in cooperation with the BEC officials. This aspect again highlights my argument that the residents experience the performed change of lifestyle in the process of appropriating the house as the policies limit them in their freedom to act.

In the next section I will take Ate Lorna's house as an example of how lifestyle change is reflected in the way the house is designed and developed. Or to put it another way: the design and further development of the house becomes the material objectification of a change in lifestyle. I chose the example of Ate Lorna because, apart from the model house, I spent almost every day in her house and documented my experiences. In a way, it was Ate Lorna's house through which I experienced my second socialization - as it is often called in ethnology - and became familiar with the *lifeworld* of my research partners.

The Material Objectification of a Changing Lifestyle

During my first visit in Ate Lorna's house, it appeared rather empty and unfinished. Ate Lorna and her daughters had just moved in six weeks ago and arranged themselves and their belongings in accordance with the possibilities and limits of the structure of the house. The house was still in shell-condition and had no electricity and water connection yet. Taking the model house for comparison, the walls were neither painted nor covered. The floor was like in the model house in its natural condition. Their furniture mainly consisted of two wooden beds, a cabinet, a dining table and a head-height shelf. The dining table and the shelf were made of four aluminum shelf holders and plywood. They got the materials from the company where Ate Lorna's eldest son worked at that time. The boards were covered in a plastic tablecloth. The objects stored in the shelf were covered by transparent plastic foil to protect them from dust.

I have noticed objects and toys being wrapped in transparent plastic as a common practice in several households in the housing project but also in the squatter areas and dumpsite settlements. In the squatter settlements, I often saw toys stored in their packaging nailed on the wall. In the house of a neighbor, soft toys and puppets wrapped in transparent plastic bags decorated the stairs. They were the toys of the now teenage children. For my neighbor, they were a memento of her children's childhood and as such a remembrance of the time they lived in the squatter area.

The cabinet served as dressing table, wardrobe and room divider at the same time. In the early stage, the top of the cabinet also served as an altar where Ate Lorna placed her figurines of saints – like a small figurine of *Santo Niño* in a house of glass – as well as candles and a bible. On the altar, she also positioned food offerings for her late husband, especially on special occasions or when she cooked his favorite dish like *kinilaw na pasayan* (raw shrimp salad). For a certain time, she would leave the plate with food there and then eat the leftovers.

One of the two wooden beds was placed opposite the kitchen area behind the cabinet. Ate Lorna called this space her *inside* sleeping room where she and her youngest daughter slept. During daytime, they stored all their sleeping utensils here. The second wooden bed was situated in the living area, at the sidewall between the CR and the entrance door. During the day, it served as seating for family members and visitors. At night, it became the *outside* sleeping room for the eldest daughter. When Ate Lorna's sons came for a visit, usually at the weekends, they slept on the ground on a *banig* and a foam mattress in the living area in the free space between the entrance door and the CR. In addition to the wooden bed at the entrance, six stackable plastic stools served as main seats in the house. The ceiling of the kitchen area and the roof overhang in front of the house were used for drying freshly washed laundry on hangers. The clothesline in the kitchen area thus served as an extra wardrobe at the same time, especially for the school uniform of Ate Lorna's youngest daughter.

In contrast to some neighbors, Ate Lorna did not construct a dirty kitchen outside the house. Instead, she used a charcoal oven to cook inside the house. This usually caused a thick cloud of

smoke indoors for the period the coal needed to start glowing. However, Ate Lorna did not bother about the smoke, as it is the way she prefers to cook. Only when she prepared a dish of grilled fish, she would do it outside in front of the house placing the fish right on the coal. The open space under the cemented sink was used for storing numerous buckets.

For decorating the grey-cemented walls they used calendars and colorful posters with religious images – a form of decoration I had also recognized in their former house during my two visits together with Nikita. The CR-wall was – as common in the housing project – covered with a framed portrait of Ate Lorna’s late husband in his working uniform as security guard and of her second oldest son in his graduation uniform. Additionally, pictures of family members at special occasions, like the wedding day of Ate Lorna and her husband or of the youngest daughter on United Nations Day, were displayed there. The portrait of Nikita’s graduation, Ate Lorna’s oldest daughter, was missing because at that time they could not afford to buy the frame. Thus, they preserved it in the only family album. There is also no portrait of the oldest son because he did not finish school. Graduation portraits are the most common kind of picture I recognized in houses I visited, again both in the housing project and in the squatter areas. One of the main reasons for this is that official events such as graduation ceremonies provide an opportunity to acquire a picture for people who normally cannot afford a photo camera. This, however, started to change at the time of my fieldwork through mobile phones¹⁰⁵ equipped with a camera. Apart from the pictures, the youngest daughter’s school certificates also decorated the CR-wall.

Ate Lorna regularly rearranged the interior of her unit until it looked the way she preferred at that moment.

Ate Lorna: [I feel comfortable in my house, but] when I sometimes get the feeling that I don't feel comfortable, I make changes and arrange things anew. A different shape, that's it. [...] I take a look around and if it looks nice, it's good, because I like the form of the house, if not, I move things around again. I hang curtains because in the moment you see them, it looks nice. (Interview November 15, 2011, p. 50).

The household equipment changed almost immediately at the same moment Ate Lorna received an electricity connection. As they had had an electricity connection in their former dwelling, most of their electric appliances remained there, like a rice cooker, a TV, a sound system and electric fans. But now, they were moved into their new home. With the electricity connection, the atmosphere inside the house changed noticeably. It appeared to be more vivid through sounds and *digital visitors* entering the house in the form of TV shows and daily soap operas.

¹⁰⁵ In the Philippines, mobile phones are spread in all sections of society. Pertierra even calls the Philippines the ‘texting capital of the world’ (cf. Pertierra 2006). In the housing project, residents sometimes have the chance to acquire intact mobile phones from scavengers who gather them from the private dumpsite next door. A mobile phone manufacturer regularly disposes them on the dumpsite. The same is the case for watches. Here, it becomes evident that dumpsites are especially profitable when manufacturing companies, stores and hotels dispose of their garbage there.

In November 2014, I visited the housing project again for about a week and stayed in Ate Lorna's house. Within the two and a half years of my absence, their house had changed considerably inside and outside; it was hardly recognizable. Now, they had a second floor with two separate sleeping rooms and a small open space in front. The second floor and the walls were made of plywood. One of the plank beds was placed in the open space. Curtains served as doors offering airflow and visual privacy. Both sleeping rooms were equipped with single box spring beds. The cabinet that used to serve as room divider was transferred to Nikita's sleeping room. The youngest daughter used the other sleeping room. There, I found Ate Lorna's dining table transformed into a wardrobe.

Downstairs, tiles now covered the cemented flooring and the lower parts of the wall inside the bathroom. Furthermore, the back wall of the kitchen area and the cemented sink were tiled. The other walls were painted blue. Framed drawings of flowers and *souvenirs* from different travel destinations in the world replaced the former posters and calendars as wall decoration. A sofa set consisting of an upholstered couch and two upholstered armchairs and a coffee table now marked the living area and replaced the old wooden bed. A plastic (garden) bench served as extra seating and room divider to separate the living from the kitchen area. In the kitchen area, there were now a black kitchen table and six black upholstered chairs. The six stackable stools, used before as main seats, were stored under the stairway beside the washing machine¹⁰⁶ and now served as extra seating. The wooden stairway now offered extra place for wall decoration and storage underneath.

In the one-meter area behind the house, Ate Lorna had built an annex made of concrete walls and fenced windows. On the right side (behind the kitchen area) she had installed an extra cooking area. The left side had become the sleeping room of her eldest son who now also lived in the house while Nikita and her younger brother worked abroad. The area in front of the house was marked with a cemented wall of about 50 cm height. At the same time, the wall served as cover for the water pipes hidden inside because since 2013 the community is connected to the communal water supply system.¹⁰⁷ Within these two and a half years, the Ate Lorna's house had transformed enormously. Their former mode of organization and interior design had (partly) transformed from what I call *makeshift aesthetics* to the *aesthetics of persistence*. They replaced their former homemade and unpadded seating with ready-made upholstered seating

¹⁰⁶ The washing machine was a present from Nikita to her mother to make washing clothes easier for her. However, Ate Lorna still preferred doing the laundry by hand. Thus, the washing machine rather became a decorative object inside the house objectifying their new financial capacities since her children worked overseas.

¹⁰⁷ Since the end of 2012, the housing project has its own water supply system. From Ate Lorna I learned that the *homepartners* had to exchange the pre-installed water lines in the house because they were already rotten even though they had not been in use before.

furniture in uniform style. These major alterations materially objectify the efforts of her children working abroad and thus their successful change of lifestyle. Without her children's financial help, Ate Lorna probably would have not been able to alter the house within this (rather) short time as her financial means were just enough to pay off the amortization. Thus, it also reveals the involvement of the children in the process of appropriating the house. Furthermore, a social phenomenon becomes evident that was already a topic in the presented biographies in chapter 3. While the parent generation makes an effort to provide their children with a (good) school education and, in the best case, a university degree offering a prospect of a good employment, they expect that their adult children then in return secure their parents' existence and further ensure to escape their former impoverished living conditions.

Unlike Ate Lorna's house, I realized in November 2014 that Nanay Corazon's living conditions and house (to give a contrary example) had changed little over the three years except for the construction of a second floor. They still had no electricity connection as they had decided to invest their savings in a *multicap*, which her husband used for generating an income, as he no longer worked as taxi driver. Since Nanay Corazon lost her employment in the MRF in December 2011, she tries to earn some money by selling snacks at the wet-market in the housing project. Her oldest daughter who graduated in December 2011 and became employed by a banking institute already changed jobs. She now works for a call center agency, as the payment is better.

The differences between Ate Lorna and Nanay Corazon result from their different economic situations. Since Nanay Corazon prioritized financing her children's education over paying off the amortization of the house, she now has to first pay off her open balances before she gets permission from the NGO to invest in the house. Ate Lorna, on the contrary, has the advantage that she managed to pay the monthly amortization right away and that her children invest their incomes in the design of the house.

For the analysis of the different modes of organization in the process of adapting and appropriating the house, I have chosen the examples of Ate Janis, Ate Lorna and Nanay Corazon to point out various factors active in this process. The examples show that familiar modes of organization are initially used and adapted to the material conditions of the new living environment. It is only in a second step that new modes of organization such as the introduction of tiles as floor coverings or upholstered furnishing emerge. In addition, it has become apparent that the ways in which the house can be altered depend not only on the communal policies and the financial possibilities of the residents but also on their consumption strategies.

As I have shown, the modes of organization only change over time. However, there are also immediate changes in habitual practices that arise from the interrelationship with the house. These are produced by the indoor sanitary facilities, especially of the CR. For most of my research partners, it is the first time in their life that they have sanitary facilities inside the house. This brings along major changes in how and where they perform cleaning practices especially of the body.

5.1.2 THE COMFORT OF A COMFORT ROOM

I remember a conversation with some of my neighbors. We spoke about their first feelings and impressions when they transferred into their new houses. Nigel explained that when his daughter took her first bath in the comfort room, she was completely thrilled and did not want to come out of it again.

For most of the residents of the housing project, it is the first time to live in a house provided with an indoor bathroom. In the Philippines, the term *comfort room* is used to refer to a public or private toilet, restroom and also bathroom. In everyday language, only the abbreviation CR is used. In the housing project, the CR is equipped with a flush toilet (without toilet tank), a showerhead and a faucet connected to the communal drainage system. The indoor CR creates an enormous change in the dwelling practices and dwelling experiences of the beneficiaries insofar as they now can and have to perform cleaning practices indoors.

In this last section, I will now describe and analyze the changes occurring through indoor sanitation in comparison with past dwelling experiences of my research partners. As chapter 5.2 deals with the acquisition of domestic water, which turned out to be a problematic fact, this part mainly focuses on practices of body hygiene. Therefore, I will first describe the implications of the absence of sanitary facilities in squatter areas and dumpsite settlements and afterwards describe changes produced by indoor sanitation facilities.

Walay CR – the Absence of a Toilet

Ate Lorna: [In Maharlika] it was dirty because there was no maintenance of the canal and of what else. It's not like in the province, or Zel, there we cleaned up our basement every day. There [Maharlika] you cannot sweep because it's muddy, dirty and then also the people there, they throw their garbage just everywhere. You cannot control the people, the people there are dirty.

Mel: And if you compare it with the province?

Ate Lorna: In the province it is not so bad. The dirt there is not the same because actually the dirt there comes from the trees. Because there you have a CR. You cannot live there without a CR. But the dirt here in the city is mainly garbage, human wastes, packaging's of viand which have been littered. In the province there is none of these, only leafs and wood that make up the dirt (Interview November 15, 2011, p. 48).

The living conditions in squatter areas and dumpsite settlements are devastating. Compared to other urban areas, they are the most unsafe and unhealthy. Reasons for this are lacking or poor

public services like garbage disposal, sewage system and sanitary facilities.¹⁰⁸ Trials to keep the outside area clean are fools' errands. The space outside one's dwelling is used as public dumping area for human and non-human wastes. The majority of poor households in squatter areas and dumpsite settlements have neither toilets nor bathrooms. Hence, they bathe outside and have to practice open defecation by which they contribute to the pollution of their living environment.

Mel: Living in a squatter area, isn't it difficult?

Ate Jonell: Oh yes, it is difficult, the water is steep and when it rains the water level rises, it is constantly smelly/stinky, then the people have no CR, sometimes the people just defecate everywhere, then you can clean up your house but the basement always looks dirty (Interview December 21, 2011, p. 9).

When sanitation is not available, where do people *relieve* themselves? My research partners usually answered this question with *sa kalibunan* (behind a bush), *sa dagat* (in the sea) or *sa fish pond*, i.e. outdoors and preferably outside and at the margins of the settlement.

Ate Belen: [...] There at the dumpsite people sometimes just threw it away. Then when you went to the margin you could be seen. It is different now because we just go to the CR.

Mel: But could you see people when they urinated or defecated?

Ate Belen: Yes ... you could see that, it was better when you have a hiding place but there were also people who did it without hiding, others used an umbrella, yes that's how they did it there, so you rather defecate in the evening even though you feel the need to defecate during the day you don't because it's bright. [...] sometimes I had stomachache when I urinated I repressed it that was painful (Interview December 2, 2011, pp. 35-36).

In the statement, Ate Belen describes the impact of the absence of toilets. First of all, she refers to the problem of disposing of human wastes. Secondly, she mentions the visual aspect of *open defecation* as it is practiced in an open area offering no visual privacy. Washing and cleaning one's body is also performed in an open area and thus under the (potential) gaze of others also present at the well or passing by. However, being seen while washing is regarded acceptable as long as the naked body is covered with clothing. Defecating or urinating in contrast is preferably practiced alone and unseen. Squatter areas and dumpsite settlements are crowded places, thus it is difficult to find an appropriate spot. Most often it is found outside the settlement as pointed out by Ate Belen. A bush or an umbrella can provide visual protection, i.e. a sense of privacy. Another strategy to avoid being seen while defecating is to wait until sunset to make use of the cover of darkness. However, this means holding back *bodily needs* for a certain time, which, as

¹⁰⁸ Despite several national sewerage and sanitation policies, such as the Sanitation Code of 1975 and the Clean Water Act, investment in sanitation, sewerage, and septage facilities has remained low. Improper hand washing or none at all is still common. Open defecation is still practiced in many areas, especially in highly populated ones, as toilets are not available in the majority of poor households. This results in polluted waterways and the spread of fatal and infectious diseases. The PSSR predicts that the 2015 MDG sanitation target can be achieved (footnote 15). The March 2012 JMP Report estimated national coverage for sanitation facilities in the Philippines to be 74% in 2010, with 79% coverage in urban areas and 69% in rural areas. According to NSO figures cited by NSCB in July 2012, 92.5% of households had access to basic sanitation (i.e. sanitary toilets) in 2011, up from (up to?) 76.0% in 2008, with a decrease to 83.8% by 2016 projected (Asian Development Bank 2013:16; see also Ballesteros 2010:10).

mentioned by Ate Belen, can cause pain. A further challenge involved in open defecation arises out of the conditions of the surrounding where it is practiced.

Mel: Was there a CR?

Regina: We just went to the bush. [...] it's very difficult because during high-tide we would go to the fish pond then at low tide it is very easy to walk over the fish pond but if it's high-tide it takes very long to go to the toilet because it's very slippery on the fish pond. The track is very slippery, very muddy, then it's rather difficult to defecate it takes very long (Interview November 28, 2011, pp. 9-10).

Regina used to live in the dumpsite settlement of Umapad situated only a kilometer away from the seashore. The settlement bordered on fishponds, which the dumpsite dwellers used as *public toilet*. Depending on the tides, the ground had different conditions and thus made it easier or more difficult to relieve oneself. Furthermore, others also used the spot, which again reduced the chance of a private, undisturbed moment. In Regina's statement, the impact of the condition of the surrounding becomes obvious, revealing again the agency of mud in the *lifeworld* of scavengers.

An *arinola* offers an alternative to open defecation, as I learned by Ate Jonell:

Mel: What did you do when you needed to go to the toilet?

Ate Jonell: We used an urinal pan to defecate and then we throw it there at a free spot, there is a very big open place so we go there to throw it away. Then when it floods it comes back over here. It is constantly stinky, then the water reaches up to the knee if we go outside we have a bridge very high so the children can walk over the platform because there is water all over the place (Interview December 21, 2011, p. 9).

As it should have become apparent, open defecation is a severe problem in squatter areas, posing challenges for squatter settlers:

- (1) because of missing places offering a minimum of visual privacy,
- (2) because of missing facilities for the disposal of one's wastes and
- (3) because of the respective conditions of the surroundings used for open defecation.

Taking these aspects together, relieving oneself is not only difficult and time-consuming but also has strong negative impacts on the conditions of one's dwelling environment. That means that squatter and dumpsite dwellers inevitably contribute to the pollution of their own living environment. A fact, as already pointed out further above, which has strong negative impacts on the sense of self of informal settlers, making them feeling dirty and inferior. A makeshift *comfort room* offers a slight improvement of these living conditions.

The Advantage of a Makeshift Comfort Room

As I learned from my research partners, there were few informal settlers, who constructed a CR besides or underneath their dwelling. Some allowed neighbors to also use them, charging a user fee of one peso for maintenance. Ate Hilda e.g. told me that they felt the necessity to construct their own CR to improve their living conditions especially for their children:

Ate Hilda: [We had a CR] inside our house, a flush toilet because before it was bitter because our children were still little. We had to go to the creek. Thus, we made a shack for a CR [...] the creek was used by so many it was so dirty. Therefore I tried hard to make a CR in our place, it was so bitter when it rained, we had to go into the water, so we just made a CR here inside our place, so even though there was water we put sand something like stones, then we put hallo blocks, that was our CR and cement. [...] only we used it because it gets dirty when others use it.

Mel: Where did you bathe?

Ate Hilda: Bathe? We did it here, sometimes in the CR sometimes outside the house but most often in the CR to take away the smell. [...] we fetched water from the well. We didn't bathe at the well.

Mel: Why?

Ate Hilda: The water brimmed over, it's muddy, we just fetched the water and brought it over to the house (Interview December 16, 2011, p. 3).

The makeshift CR offered Ate Hilda and her family a privately used and thus more hygienic sanitary facility that also offered a private spot to bathe. The water used for bathing afterwards served for keeping the CR clean. Ate Lorna also had a CR. It was a shack constructed underneath their house equipped with a flush toilet with an outlet. For flushing the toilet, they fetched water from the next well and carried it home in a bucket. They also used the CR for bathing. The wastewater was disposed of right in the bordering river. The river served as dumping area not only for wastewater but also for all kind of other wastes of private households and industrial companies located along the river. The water was black, a sign of its extreme pollution. Therefore, the people call it *black river*. Despite its pollution, children use the river as playground where they go swimming and searching for treasures that could be sold or used. The advantage of a makeshift CR is not only that it offers privacy to relieve oneself but also to clean one's body in a private setting. Without a CR, informal settlers commonly bathe right at the well or in front of the house under the potential gaze of others. This I will briefly outline in the following section.

Maligo Sa Tabay – Bathing at the Well

In squatter settlements like in rural areas, people commonly bathe outdoors right at the water source which usually is a communal (shallow or deep) well. Here, water can be acquired for free but has to be fetched by physical effort. Squatter areas and dumpsite settlements often have access to several wells donated by politicians or charitable organizations. Water is not only fetched from there and carried home. Rather, cleaning practices (like bathing and washing

clothes) are performed there as well. In the interview with Nanay Corazon we talked about this topic and she explained her technique of bathing at the well:

Mel: So where did you take a bath?

Nanay Corazon: At the well. [...] when I went to the well I put on shorts and t-shirt, I never undressed, it is different, you cannot undress because it is open, you know, it's an open space, there is no 'cover' so I put on shorts like what I am wearing now so that it's easy. [...] because when you put on a duster¹⁰⁹ you cannot rub (Nanay Corazon gives a demonstration) if you put a duster you have to roll it up and then you show what you have underneath. (everyone is laughing) So shorts and t-shirt are better because [...] when you want to wash yourself here right (referring to her 'private area') it is different when you wear a duster it is open and then you uhm here (laughing) so shorts are good afterwards they are soaking wet. [...] it is difficult when you wear a duster, or a skirt is also bad, this kind of shorts is fine. You also do not put on something with sleeves like a long sleeve. [...] just sleeveless when you take a bath because then it is easier when you want to wash yourself here, your armpit, otherwise it is difficult and tight, so when I go bathing I have a 'bathing suit', a thin pair of shorts with garter. Because when you wear shorts it is also difficult because of the zipper and a pair of shorts with garter stretches when you are naked, then when it is soaked it is very easy.

Mel: When you go to the well to take a bath, do you go alone or together with someone?

Nanay Corazon: It depends on if my children if they say let's have a bath together. But there are also many neighbors, it's not just us because it is open, it's common (Interview November 8, 2011, pp. 16-17).

The well is a public space where cleaning one's body takes place in companionship and under the (potential) gaze of others. As pointed out by Nanay Corazon, clothing here is an advantage and disadvantage at the same time. On the one hand, it provides visual protection of the naked body and thus a minimum of privacy within the public sphere. On the other hand, it makes washing the body *lisud kaayo* (very difficult).

Jemma, another research partner who used to dwell in the close neighborhood of a dumpsite settlement, explained that they used a neighbor's private well located only few meters away from their dwelling. All in all, members of ten families also used the well. She described that in the morning and evening hours, there was a hustle and bustle. Therefore, she called the time between 5 am and 7 am *rush hour*. This is the time when people take a bath before going to work or to school. They had to line up and wait for their turn. Sometimes people started quarreling and jumping the queue. Thus, to avoid the crowds she used to fetch water at night and carried it home.¹¹⁰

In the Philippines, bathing at a well and outdoors is not only common within informal settlements, but still in semi-urban and rural areas, which are not yet connected to centralized sewerage systems.¹¹¹ However, bathing outdoors it makes a difference whether it is performed in a

¹⁰⁹ Duster is a dress women wear at home for lounging around the house.

¹¹⁰ cf. Interview with Jemma July 19, 2011, p. 18.

¹¹¹ In 2011, the Philippines had a population of 94 million people. 7.5 million Filipinos were, however, without access to improved water supply facilities and 24 million without access to improved sanitation. Roughly 8.3

rather familiar and remote surrounding with few others or in an urban squatter area populated by hundreds of people in a dense and dirty environment under the eyes of numerous passers-by. During my fieldwork, I bathed at a well twice. In the following, I will describe one of my experiences.

Digression – Bathing Outdoors

For All Saints' Day, I accompanied Nikita and her family to Bohol to visit their relatives and the grave of Nikita's father, who had died seven years before. We stayed in the house of Nikita's aunt, her father's sister, and her family. They lived in the province of Bohol in a house made of concrete and wood. The house consisted of a living room, two separate bedrooms and a (dirty) kitchen constructed in native style. The house had neither bathroom nor water facilities in the kitchen. There was an outhouse a few meters away from the kitchen, which was mainly used by the adult residents during the day. The little children rather seemed to relieve themselves outdoors. At night, they went in front of the house to avoid walking through the darkness. Bathing was practiced at a deep well situated about 400m away from the house. Until recently they had had a deep well in the backyard, which got contaminated. However, for washing the water was still fine. Thus, during our stay I got the chance to practice bathing outdoors at a well for the first time.

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After breakfast, I accompany Nikita, her sister and her cousin with her two little children to the well to take a bath. We take three buckets and three plastic dippers with us and get on our way. We leave the property through a gate. From there we follow a trail passing by rice fields on the right hand and a field with sporadic carabaos on the left hand. Then we pass by a small forest behind which the well is situated. The well is installed in the middle of a concrete slab of about 3x3 meters size. Empty shampoo sachet packaging is lying around on the ground. The well is open and equipped with a bucket on a rope to fetch the water. We take turns to fill the buckets we brought with us. Pulling up the bucket is exhausting. When filled, it takes about three to four moves to pull the bucket up. We first fill all the buckets and then start our bath. We use the plastic dippers to pour water over our head and dressed bodies. The water is cold and feels refreshing in the tropical warmth/heat. I wear a t-shirt, underpants, long wide thin trousers and flip-flops. I first of all roll up the legs of my trousers up to my hips, that makes it easier to wash my legs. For washing I use shampoo and shower gel in a 250ml packaging. Nikita and her sister have no soap. Nikita's cousin carries a plastic bowl with a piece of soap and shampoo in sachet packaging. In the process of soaping my body, I have to realize that it is much easier to use a piece of soap to wash my body underneath my t-shirt instead of liquid soap. The liquid soap right away disappears in my t-shirt. I find it really difficult to manage to wash my body under the shirt without showing too much of my naked skin. After soaping my body once and washing of the soap I have the feeling of being finished. However, Nikita asks me if I'm already done and I realize that the others soap their body twice. When the others are done too, we walk back to the house. My clothes are soaking wet, cold and stick to my body. Now walking in my flip-flops feels slippery. Back in the house, we take off the wet clothes in the sleeping room. But we do not just take the clothes off. Nikita uses a towel which she wraps around herself to cover her body when taking of her clothes. I take her as example but instead of a towel I use my 'malong'¹¹² as

million people still defecate in the open and just 3% are connected to centralized sewerage systems (cf. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank 2015: iv).

¹¹² The *malong* is a traditional *tube skirt*. It is made of hand-woven or machine-made multi-colored cotton cloth, bearing a variety of designs. It is traditionally used as a garment by numerous tribes in the Southern Philippines

'dressing room'. However, it is not as easy as I thought. It is rather a challenge to undress, dry my body and dress while trying at the same time to avoid that the malong slips of my shoulders.

This experience gave me a slight idea of what it means to practice washing oneself at a well. Compared with what I am used to, namely washing my body under a shower, it is a completely different cleaning practice and experience. Taking a shower involves less physical effort, is less time-consuming, takes place in a private, indoor environment and is thus independent of outdoor conditions like the weather. Bathing at a well involves physical effort ranging from walking back and forth to the water point, fetching a certain amount of water from the well needed for wetting and rinsing off the soap from the body and clothes. In a modern shower, the practice of bathing by scooping water from the bucket and pouring it over one's head is provided by the technology incorporated in a shower facility. Shower facilities reduce the physical effort involved in bathing at a well to a minimum. Furthermore, time and space are overcome by the involved infrastructure providing the water and energy needed at the spot. The amount of the energy and water consumed is counted and recorded by the respective meters and charged at a different time. This shows how technology generates experiences which are detached from the knowledge about the infrastructure, resources and energy involved to make it possible.

Changing Lives by Indoor Sanitary Facilities

The example of the CR reveals the central transformations arising out of the performed change of lifestyle from living in a makeshift dwelling in a squatter area to a *modern* house made of concrete with indoor sanitary facilities. By transferring practices of body hygiene indoors the use and concept of private and public space transforms as well as the practices themselves.

- (1) Visual privacy: is essential when performing body hygiene in a public space. Now, it does no longer need to be produced temporarily or searched for. Instead, the CR offers a ready-to-use private space where walls offer visual protection. Now my research partners can relieve themselves at any time of the day without waiting for the cover of darkness in order not to be disturbed by passers-by.
- (2) Hygiene and comfort: The CR and its facilities make practices of body hygiene more hygienic and more comfortable as it involves less physical effort. The installed water

and the Sulu Archipelago. It can function as a skirt for both men and women, as well as a blanket, a sunshade, a bed sheet, a hammock, a prayer mat, and other purposes. Emma, one of the social workers from the housing project, brought the *malong* for me to use as a bed sheet for an excursion to Bohol. Afterwards, it became my general bed sheet replacing the fleece rug I bought when I moved to the housing project. It was much more comfortable during the warm nights. I either slightly covered my body with it or snuggled inside on 'colder' nights. I also took it with me on excursions to the beach to use it as a towel and improvised *dressing room*.

pipes and water outlets (showerhead in the *comfort room* and faucet in the kitchen) (in principle) provide water inside the house. Moreover, the drainage system facilitates the disposal of wastewater and human wastes. These enable the residents to easily keep their living environment clean and hygienic as long as they properly maintain the sanitary facilities.

- (3) Improvement of the state of health: The hygienic living conditions show positive effects on the residents' state of health. This becomes evident in the condition of their body, especially the skin. After living in the housing project for a certain time, their skin shows less signs of irritations. Thus, the skin of the residents is another indicator for the residents' status of transition. In contrast to the changing state of the house, the decisive factor for an improvement of the residents state of health is mainly time.
- (4) Privacy and protection: The shift of practices of body hygiene from outdoors to indoors further entails that practices of body hygiene transform from a collective outdoor to an individual indoor practice. That means, while bathing at the well was usually practiced together with other family members and neighbors, they now do it alone. Furthermore, it allows the residents to practice body hygiene independent of weather conditions in a protected space. A fact which from the perspective of the NGO is an important contribution of the house to improving the living conditions of the residents with regard to their safety.

Besides concrete as main building material of the house, it is the indoor sanitary facilities that lead to a substantial change in my research partners' dwelling experiences. Both affect my research partners' sense of *safety and well-being* positively.¹¹³ This I will further highlight in the following by describing the aesthetics of concrete.

5.1.3 THE AESTHETICS OF CONCRETE

Are we rich? – Referring to the video documentation of the first Ritual of Transfer performed on October 28, 2008, this was the initial question of the children when entering their new house.

¹¹³ In her article on the introduction of bathrooms in working-class houses in America, Hoagland refers to letters written by employees of the Calumet & Hecla's company asking for the installation of indoor toilets in their houses. "Indoor toilets were not necessities. [...] But an indoor toilet was a convenience and an outdoor facility an annoyance". (2011:28-29). Thus, the residents assigned the following reasons to add weight to their request: inconvenience for grown people, young children, impact of weather conditions, burden for women, etc. Even though the living conditions of residents of working-class houses and residents of squatter settlements are not comparable, it becomes more than evident that outdoor toilets are already experienced as inconvenient and causing difficulties especially for women with young children and for elderly or sick people. So the challenges for informal settlers who have endure without any toilet facilities at all become even more apparent.

This *initial response* - which implies the idea of social advancement - is affected by the formal structure and size of the house, its interior design and also by the material concrete. From the perspective of my research partners, *concrete* is an expensive building material. In their former lives, they would not have made use of concrete because of its costs and because of their illegal dwelling status in the squatter area, as pointed out by Ate Belen:

Ate Belen: [Our dwelling] was just patched together, you cannot build a big house using concrete because it is not your land. You cannot use concrete when it is not your land. Like when you put concrete and then they come and say you are evicted because it is not your land (Interview December 2, 2011, p. 5)

My research partners built their former houses of light materials like (ply-)wood, carton, corrugated sheet metal, tarpaulin, etc., or used organic materials like bamboo or *nipa*, which are common within traditional Filipino architecture. These materials are locally available cheaply or for free (when gathered from dumping areas along streets and riverbanks) and can be re-used in case the residents have to move. Thus, light materials and their characteristics correspond with the temporary living conditions of informal settlers. However, they only provide shelter and a certain degree of privacy. But what they lack is protection against natural and human forces:

Nanay Corazon: Life there [squatter-area] is not safe, it's frightful. Think of strong wind, our house there was made of light materials, think of flooding, our house would flood because there was already water underneath before. There is no safety. Here, it's different because, God beware it burns here, but it will only take the wood, but the cement will remain, it will not be affected. Furthermore, it will not spread suddenly/quickly because of the cement. In case it burns somewhere over there, it will not quickly come over here ... the houses there [in the squatter area] are all made of light materials, some of the houses are only made of sacks, plywood, that's the reason why fire would spread quickly, fire suddenly flares up, it's really like this. Imagine you go to bed and fall asleep, God beware you get trapped on your pathway, what do you do? It is very muddy there because of the water underneath. Or imagine no one is in your house because everyone is at work. Then you come home and everything is burned down, your house, the only things left are the clothes you wear on your body. That's what happened when it burned in Aroma, no one was at home because everyone was at work (Interview November 8, 2011, p. 35).

Nanay Corazon's statement describes well what Berner (2000) calls the vulnerability of urban poor informal settlers. As already outlined in chapter 3, vulnerability partly results from their low economic status but also from the poor material qualities of their dwellings, which are not suitable to protect their residents from the numerous potential risks posed by the living conditions of squatter areas like fire (set accidentally or intentionally), flooding or eviction. Socialized by these uncertain dwelling conditions, my research partners now consider their new houses as very safe because of concrete. They e.g. assume that a fire would not harm their house because they expect that the concrete fundament withstands the flames. Thus, by transferring into a house made of concrete, my research partners' feelings towards their dwelling situation transform from mistrust into a sense of safety accompanied by an altered perception of natural

forces. Natural forces like heavy rain, storm and especially fire are experienced as less threatening and no longer trigger existential fears. The improved sense of safety resulting from this is further enhanced by the legal status of their new house, as Ate Hilda points out in the following statement:

Ate Hilda: I am happy to live in a nice, stable house, which will be mine after a while because when you go to Maharlika the lives there have no future because of demolition. So that meant for us, we have no future in our life because we live in a squatter area. And then there are times when the squatter area is demolished, well, that's it, life there has no future (Interview December 16, 2011, p. 18).

Due to the insecure living conditions and the illegal status of their informal dwellings, my research partners lived in permanent uncertainty as to whether their house or even they themselves would still be there the next day. The informal lifestyle creates an attitude towards life which my research partners described with the Cebuano expression *walay ugma*, meaning: 'you don't know if tomorrow will come'. It further gives rise to the economic practice which I called elsewhere 'to live out of the pocket', i.e. generating just as much money as is needed to fulfill the needs of the moment or day.

The housing project now offers the former informal settlers a new starting point and thus a perspective for the future, because

- (1) the house creates an unprecedented concrete fundament in the life of the former informal settlers, a material foundation in a safe and clean surrounding where they can build a future for their families;
- (2) with the house and lot, they acquire material property, which they can pass on to their children and thus ensure their existence and provide for their future;
- (3) by becoming a *homepartner* they agreed to assume long-term responsibility on both the individual and the collective level: on the one hand paying off the house within 25 years; and on the other hand engaging actively in the affairs of the BEC in order to contribute to the creation and successful development of a self-sustained community.

Especially for those of my research partners who migrated to the city in the hope of living a better life and escaping poverty there, *being a homepartner* and now living in a *nice and proper house in clear conditions* seems as if they have accomplished their objectives even though they know that they are still *poor*. Here, it is the house made of concrete and as such its aesthetics which becomes socially effective as a symbol for past objectives and future aspirations. It reveals what Carsten and Hugh-Jones describe as the intimate link between people and their house. Ate Hilda describes the causal relationship in the following statement:

Ate Hilda: The place where I lived before changed my life a lot. Because, if you live in a squatter area because for me it seems that I felt like being only inferior. But since I live in a village my personality grew and feels big. Now, if there are visitors coming we do not feel ashamed. There, it seems as we were always ashamed, we go to a hidden place, we feel ashamed because our surrounding is dirty, our house is very small, but here even though it's far I smile when someone who I know comes to visit me because I am proud about now living in a house here. Never again squatter area, we feel ashamed of visitors. Only randomly we would say come over for a visit, here I feel proud, there in the squatter area I never did (Interview December 16, 2011, p. 19).

Ate Hilda's statement not only highlights this intimate link between people and their dwelling environment (to use the broader term), but also reveals a further effect of the concrete house, i.e. it improves the residents' sense of self. My research partners feel proud about what they have reached and made possible by what they call *paningkamot* (working hard). By moving to the housing project, they have managed to escape the poor and dirty living conditions of the squatter area that made them feel inferior. As pointed out by Ate Hilda, she felt ashamed to invite relatives and friends. A feeling that is - as I have learned - quite common for squatter settlers and especially dumpsite dwellers (cf. again chapter 3). The reasons for this are manifold and striking especially on the level of hygiene: Due to the lack of proper sanitary facilities, especially toilets as well as garbage disposal systems, squatter settlers inevitably contribute to the pollution and unsanitary conditions of their own living environment. Not because they do not know any better, but because they have no choice. Here, what MacDougall pointed out to be characteristic of social landscapes becomes obvious: They are not only the backdrop of everyday life but also its product. A product that is able to have both negative (as was the case in squatters' settlements) and positive effects (as seems to be the case for the housing project) on the people living there. In the following I will show the effects of dirt and mud on informal settlers, especially those dwelling in dumpsite settlements, to illustrate the differences produced by the improved conditions of the housing project.

A Matter of Dirt and Cleanliness

In contrast to the squatter areas and dumpsite settlements, my research partners experience the housing project as *clean*. This is also related to the material of concrete. It gives buildings a formal look and is furthermore applied as a means against muddy ground and weeds. Thus, people use this material to beautify the surroundings of the house. In the squatter areas, my research partners made the experience that every attempt to keep the area outside their house clean was pointless as the informal settlers used it as public dumping area for all kinds of organic and non-organic wastes. Hence, they had been mainly concerned with keeping at least the interior of their dwellings, their clothing and their bodies as clean as possible. From this context it becomes obvious that practicing cleanliness as far as possible is important to uphold

a positive sense of self in a dirty environment and in order to prevent oneself from being called *careless*, as pointed out by Vito (cf. chapter 3.6). Scavengers and dumpsite settlers, however, make the experience that to *remain clean* in the surroundings of the dumpsite (settlement) is a rather futile endeavor because of the muddy ground and the smoky and dusty air. Independent from each other, Regina and Ate Janis spoke about this phenomenon. They described that within only a short time, heavy rain showers transform the underground into sticky muddy ground making it difficult to walk without slipping or sinking in – something I experienced myself during several visits to the dumpsite settlement. The mud sticks under the shoes, forming thick soles underneath. Before my companions and I would visit a family or go to the chapel situated in the center of the dumpsite settlement, we first went to the deep well to clean our feet from the mud.

Regina and Ate Janis both stated that one gets dirty just from walking around. Their children and their clothing were constantly dirty even though they started with a bath in the morning. This has completely changed since they moved to the housing project, as described in a statement of Ate Janis:

Ate Janis: It seems as if our life here is easier, from what I hear my family seems to be safe. My children look different, I don't see them anymore wearing make-up made of coal, their clothes aren't constantly dirty anymore, suz, it was so tiring all the time. Even if you kept changing clothes, they were dirty right away. You never see them clean because of the dirty surroundings. Really, there are so many bonfires. Then when you walk around there it sticks to your body. Here [housing project], even when they were running around outside from morning till evening and you did not wash them in the evening, they go to bed straightaway and when you then see them in the morning, they are still clean. There, it's not the same. [...] Therefore I think it's safe here regarding sicknesses, their bodies seem to be different compared with before (Interview December 8, 2011, p. 27).

The statement illustrates to what extent everyday life in a dumpsite settlement is affected by dirt, mud and smoke. In these living conditions, cleaning and remaining clean is a constant challenge. Furthermore, smoke and dirt negatively affect the health of the settlers and especially that of the children. Common childhood diseases are skin irritations, fever and a cough.

Here the meaning of *proper conditions* becomes evident especially from the point of view of the former scavengers. The following factors contribute to this: The material conditions and facilities of the provided built environment together with the policies appeal to the residents' ecological responsibility to keep their dwelling environment clean. Insofar, concrete contributes to the aesthetic impression of cleanliness. An impression strengthened by the experience of a facilitation of cleaning with positive effects on my research partners' sense of self and sense of comfort in their new dwelling environment.

That cleanliness is a value I also quickly became aware of during my fieldwork. Every other day, I heard the sound of someone scrubbing the floor. I saw my neighbors sweeping the area outside their house and doing the laundry outdoors in front of the house. These cleaning practices all involve the extensive use of the body and rather simple equipment. That the residents do these household cleaning practices themselves is an expression of their social and economic status, because in the Philippines those who can afford it would rather employ a domestic helper for these tasks. This I first learned indirectly by one of the NGO employees who even before I stayed in the housing project introduced me to a woman from the community who offered to wash my laundry. Then I made this experience in conversations about this topic. My conversation partners always were surprised that I did the cleaning of the house and of my laundry on my own. While they somehow accepted it in the context of my research, they however assumed that naturally I have a domestic helper in Germany, which was not the case. When I then told them that my mother used to work as a domestic helper, they were even more confused as they expected my family and me to be rich.

The abovementioned details illustrate that my research partners consider concrete as a valuable material that is resistant and durable. As has been shown, the house made of concrete initially produces positive effects with regard to the residents' feeling of safety, self-esteem and temporal orientation. From an aesthetic point of view, I therefore argue that these positive effects are produced by the aesthetics of concrete giving rise to the idea of a better life, which I have already described in chapter 4.3.2. While the aesthetics of concrete gives rise to rather positive feelings, the way in which concrete is experienced sensorily seems, on the contrary, to generate negative feelings due to its temperature and thermal properties. This will be the topic of the following section.

Experiencing Concrete

In the everyday use, the residents experience the material of concrete in the haptic interaction as cold. This is the case because they usually walk barefoot inside their house and are used to sleeping on the floor. These practices now are negatively affected by the concrete flooring. Instead of walking barefoot, people now wear slippers inside the house to prevent health consequences.

Whenever I visited Nikita in her house, Ate Lorna admonished me to put on slippers. Once I asked her for the reason. She told me that she gets joint pains because of cold feet – a result from walking barefoot on the concrete flooring. The way Ate Lorna admonished me produced a familiar feeling in me. It reminded me of my childhood, where it was my mother who told me to do so the same way whenever I walked barefoot on tiled floor at home.

The concrete flooring creates a new need in the dwelling experience of my research partners, namely to introduce a means of protection as response to the cold temperature of concrete. In this case indoor slippers present a new consumer good in the household of my research partners causing new extra costs, at least if they are not acquired for free.¹¹⁴ A further negative effect of

¹¹⁴My host family did not buy home slippers but used those which hotels usually give to their guests. The same I observed in other households. They received them from neighbors who found them on the dumpsite unused and clean. When I came back from a conference in Manila, I also brought some back with me and gave them to my host family.

the temperature of concrete arises with regard to my research partners' habitual sleeping practices. In the following explanation Ate Janis describes her feelings about sleeping on the floor and how it has changed since she built a second floor:

Mel: So how is your house now? What is your feeling inside the house?

Ate Janis: Haha ... hm since we finished the second floor it seems as if I'm not afraid anymore of lying down on the cemented floor. Really, when I saw my children lying down in the evening on the cemented floor, because we lost our banig and then when we lie down ... goodness it's cold. Ay I really felt so worried, [...] worried about my children because we didn't yet finish the second floor. Even we didn't have the money, I looked for money to build a second floor because my children slept on the floor, then would roll over. Then when I got up, their bodies felt so cold. I was so worried, God beware they would get sick. Therefore, I looked for money to build a second floor. Now we are better off because we have a second floor where we can all sleep. Now, we do not sleep anymore on the ground floor because I am worried, God beware anyone gets a cough. What can you do because the cement is very cold even when you double the banig, [...] I try to hold them back, but they always roll back on the cement. Especially when it's hot and they feel hot and they lay on a blanket, they intentionally roll over to the cold. I always try to find a way they stay on the blanket (Interview December 8, 2011, p. 30).

In her statement, it becomes obvious that sleeping on the cemented flooring is not primarily a matter of comfort but of physical well-being. As concrete is cold by touch, Ate Janis fears that her children could get sick when sleeping on the ground. Even though she makes use of a *banig* or blankets, it is not enough insulation to keep her children warm when sleeping. From the perspective of Ate Janis, the cemented flooring presented a new potential risk for sickness and triggered the need to construct a second floor as soon as possible although she and her husband at first did not have the necessary funds. As I will show in a later section, they applied their *scavenger-consumption strategy* to construct the second floor, i.e. by collecting and re-using discarded materials.

Other households used a plank bed or foam mattress to sleep on, or put carton underneath the *banig* when sleeping on the cemented flooring as means of insulation. At the time of my fieldwork, there was – as far as I know – no household that used proper beds for sleeping yet.

Banig - Digression

On a market in Bohol, I bought a banig for the model house. Estela, one of the social worker of the housing project, accompanied me. She advised me to put carton underneath if I wanted to sleep on it in the model house. Otherwise, she said it would be too cold to sleep on because of the cemented flooring. However, I did not intend to sleep on the banig but rather to use it as a carpet to sit on when having visitors. In the model house, the banig became the central place for social gatherings. Here, I ate together with my visitors and conducted the interviews. Interestingly, the banig always triggered the same kind of responses: When a visitor entered the house and saw the banig lying on the ground s/he would ask: 'Sorry, did I disturb your sleep?' Or 'Sorry, were you just up to having a nap?' My visitors directly associated the banig with sleeping. This became also apparent during interviews. My interview partners who took a seat on the banig would say: 'Suz, I get sleepy'. Here, the banig serves as an example to first demonstrate the agency of things, with regard to my research partners, and second for how I adapted the banig to my specific dwelling needs in the field.

The example of walking barefoot indoors and sleeping on the ground shows that my research partners respond to the haptic experience of concrete with adjusting habituated practices to the

new material condition of the house, which requires the introduction of new consumer goods or major alterations of the house.

There is a second sensory experience of concrete, i.e. its thermal performance. Even though concrete is cold in direct touch, it is a very poor thermal performer. It collects and transmits thermal radiation into the house, and then traps the heat inside (cf. Wilhite 2008:114). My research partners usually described the air inside their house as *alimúut*, meaning ‘hot and stuffy’. On hot and humid days, the hot air seems to *stay* inside the house. Keeping the louver windows and the front and back door open only contributes little to improving the room temperature. The air inside the house is further deteriorated when a second floor is added. This is not the case for traditional dwellings made of locally available organic materials like woven wall panels promoting airflow in and out. Some of my research partners mentioned the thermal condition of their new houses as a factor in their modes of organization. Ate Clara e.g. mentioned that one reason why she has no second floor yet is because she likes the house to be more open and less *alimúut*. Another research partner mentioned that she and her husband did not yet transfer all their furniture and belongings because her mother-in-law still lives in their former house in the dumpsite settlement. She cannot transfer as long as they have no electricity connection in order to use an electric fan. Without that, it is too *alimúut* in the house, which her mother in law cannot cope with physically. Their house in the dumpsite is built on stilts and made of organic materials with open windows. Thus, with regard to air they consider it more comfortable despite the otherwise poor living conditions.

The example of the housing project also reveals the tendency Oliver (1990) and Wilhite (2008) both describe as an effect of the introduction of concrete as new construction material for modern housing: Concrete affects a transformation in dwelling practices and produces new needs for consumer goods. In the case of my research partners these are e.g. new sleeping facilities, the need to construct a second floor or the need of an electricity connection in order to use an electric fan or air conditioning to compensate the negative material qualities of concrete. Now the question arises as to whether these are needs or desires that arise from living in a *nice house*. As I will show in Chapter 5.3, given the living conditions of my research partners, the installation of electric light is rather a necessity, whereas the installation of air conditioning can rather be considered a desire, especially in view of the fact that most residents cannot even afford an electricity connection. For them, the hot and stuffy air is easier to tolerate as a side effect of their nice house than the fact that they have to forego electric light due to a lack of financial means and the existing communal policies. Therefore, they occasionally simply continue to visit a shopping mall to enjoy the *cool air*.

For the present thesis, answering the question whether these are needs or desires is less relevant than highlighting that both effects arise from the residents' daily interaction with their new houses. They are a response to the new living conditions and their affordances, which entail

- (1) a change in consumption practices and
- (2) an increase of the residents' living expenses.
- (3) These in turn pose new financial challenges for the residents who still struggle to secure their existence.

Here the transformative effect of concrete on dwelling practices shows in the transition from living in a house made of light materials to a house made of concrete. Therefore, I argue that concrete is an aesthetic fact in the new dwelling experience of my research partners. Concrete as a building material on the one hand and as an aesthetic quality on the other hand matter to my research partners because they make a crucial difference in the daily interaction with the house when comparing between present and past dwelling experiences.

How my research partners value these effects, whether positive or negative, is initially irrelevant for this aspect. Rather, it is relevant that concrete becomes socially effective as an aesthetic fact. This is reflected, for example, in the fact that when my research partners move into the housing project, they experience an enhancement of their self, which makes a first change in their lifestyle perceptible. However, social effects do not only arise through the aesthetics of the house, but also through communal policies. They are not effective in their own rights, but have both an impact on the residents' dwelling experiences and their interrelationship with the house. I will outline this briefly as the last aspect of the aesthetics of concrete in order to show how these two different social facts - the aesthetics of concrete and the policies - are intertwined. For this I address once again the level of the sense of safety of my research partners.

Feeling (Un-)Safe - A Matter of (Good) Performance

Nanay Corazon: From my point of view I like it here in [the housing project] because your life/dwelling is safe. The problem however is the payment for the house (Interview November 8, 2011, p. 30).

Ate Jonell: From my point of view I feel safe now because we have a house [...] God has mercy with us that we will survive the 'down payment' so that we won't be evicted because some three of our companions from Aroma have been already evicted (Interview December 21, 2011, p. 33).

Ate Lorna: I'm happy because of having a house. When I manage to pay for it, we won't have to return there [squatter area], because that's the policies. In case you cannot pay, you have to go back. I'm careful not to make mistakes, but there are people who make up stories accusing you even though you didn't do anything. It keeps me on thinking what we will do if we make a mistake even it's not on purpose ... then we would have to go back to where we came from. But some of us have

no house anymore at that place. I would feel much safer if the house was already paid! (Interview November 15, 2011, p. 42)

The statements of Nanay Corazon, Ate Jonell and Ate Lorna illustrate the ambivalent feelings that arise from the intertwining of the social facts mentioned above. While the materiality of the house and its legal status improve my research partners' sense of safety, the communal policies and the new financial responsibility as a *homepartner* contribute to keeping alive the sense of insecurity and the well-known concern about the possibility of eviction. Ate Lorna's statement also shows that these facts, taken together, become socially effective in the interaction between neighbors.

Transferring to the housing project not only implies a change in the material conditions of the dwelling environment but furthermore a transition from an informal, self-organized lifestyle to a formalized and policy-based way of life. This, first of all, implies a transformation of the status of the residents from former illegal dwellers qualifying them as potential *beneficiaries* of the housing project to legal *homepartners*. Becoming a *homepartner* entails a temporal financial obligation, i.e. to pay off the mortgage of the house within 25 years. While on the one hand, this financial obligation gives rise to a future perspective as outlined above, on the other hand it presents the main challenge involved in the transition process. In the interview, Nanay Corazon e.g. compared her (financial) situation with that of other residents, pointing out two (assumed) differences between her neighbors and her. First, that she had no savings at the time she and her family transferred, and second that her children are studying. Thus, despite their double incomes they struggle to pay the monthly amortization and already have an open balance; a fact that strongly matters to her because – in connection with the policies – it stops her from applying for an electricity connection (cf. chapter 5.3). This leads me to the second major challenge involved in the transition process, namely the policies. As already described in chapter 4, the *Occupancy Rules and Deeds of Restrictions* regulate all affairs involved with dwelling, and communal affairs are organized by the tasks and obligations of active membership in the BEC. These regulations create new economic, social and political circumstances for the residents. On the one hand, my research partners mentioned that they are positive about the policies as they provide guidance in their life, as pointed out by Ate Lani and Ate Clara:

Ate Lani: It's nice when there are policies you can follow, because then you know what is the right thing to do/ how to properly behave (Interview December 20, 2011, p. 16)

Ate Clara: [...] I do believe the policies are there to keep things in order and for everyone to have a guide to prevent chaos (Interview November 29, 2011, p. 40).

However, all of my research partners also spoke about their difficulties to understand and comply with the policies, usually pointing out that they still need time to adjust. The challenge of

adjusting to these new circumstances is also reflected in my research partners' dwelling experiences with regard to their sense of safety. Despite their legal dwelling status, the residents are well aware of the fact that the organization has the authorization to evict families if *homepartners* repeatedly violate the *Occupancy Rules and Deeds of Restriction* or if they are finally not able to meet their financial obligations. Therefore, as already mentioned by Ate Lorna, my research partners are afraid of making *mistakes*. Moreover, the uncertainty caused by open balances creates an ambivalent feeling towards their aspired status as future *homeowners*, as it became a topic between my research assistant Lori and Ate Lorna:

Ate Lorna: I would feel much safer if the house was already paid!

Lori: It seems like renting.

Ate Lorna: The difference with renting however is that as long as you can pay you have a place to stay. Here [housing project] they have policies to follow ... so if you commit mistakes you lose the assurance of living here... in terms of paying I could assure because I do my very best to pay [...] (Interview November 15, 2011, p. 42-43).

These concerns of either not being able to pay the amortization or of making mistakes are quite widespread among the *homepartners* of the housing project. Instead of feeling like a *future homeowner*, they feel rather like a *tenant* who does not pay a monthly amortization but a rent. Upon closer examination of my research partners' sense of safety, the intertwining of several facts - here the aesthetics of concrete with the communal policies - and that they produce contradicting effects becomes apparent. Both have a strong impact on the residents' dwelling experiences and their interrelationship with the house. While concrete initially has a positive influence on my research partners' sense of safety, the communal policies produce an unsettling effect, which contributes to the residents' continued fear of the possibility of eviction. As pointed out above, it is the reason why especially those residents who struggle financially consider themselves rather as *tenants* instead of *homepartners*. It is important to understand this aspect, as it shows how ambivalent feelings towards the house and the decision to move to the housing project arise. In addition to the supply of electricity, which I will discuss in chapter 5.3, the supply of water also contributes to this feeling.

At the time of my fieldwork, water supply was one of the main problems of the infrastructural development of the housing project. Despite the availability of indoor sanitary facilities the housing project had not yet been connected to the municipal water grid. Living in a house with indoor sanitary facilities but without access to water therefore had a strong impact on the everyday life of the residents. How the residents dealt with the absence of a running water supply is the topic of the next chapter.

5.2 WATER: THE ABSENCE OF A VITAL GOOD

Malaya: Water is more important than electricity because instead of electricity you can use a gas lamp. But you need water to cook and to drink (Interview November 13, 2011, p. 25).

Water is a resource essential for life. It is humanity's main sustenance. Therefore, access to water, especially clean water, is absolutely vital for people's well-being. From a Western perspective, it seems to be taken for granted nowadays to live in a house with water installations and access to running water in bathroom and kitchen. Living in a house that provides the physical infrastructure for the use of running water in the form of water lines, toilet, shower and sink has major impacts on the consumption of water. While modern households consume an average of 127 liters of clean drinking water per day for washing, cleaning and cooking, the World Health Organization estimates that 2.1 billion people lack safe drinking water at home and more than twice as many lack safe sanitation. Mainly the poorest are affected by these living conditions.

For a long time, water did not seem to be of interest for anthropological research. Like the house, it seemed to be rather taken for granted and thus too banal for the study of cultural and social differences.

„We encounter water no matter where we live and work. It trickles across forest floors and consolidates in rivers. It collects behind dams, runs under cities, and is diverted into irrigation systems. It is pumped from wells and travels in plastic bottles. It makes up our bodies and shapes our institutions“ (Carse 2010).

Despite or maybe exactly because of our constant encounter with water, it is only within the last twenty years that there is a rising interest in water. Following Carse, “water has emerged as a critical matter of concern for – and often point of tension between – policy-makers, corporations, resource managers, and numerous user communities” (ibid.). Anthropologists are interested in the different cultural notions and usages of water. From this perspective, water is a complex and valuable substance. It exists in countless kinds. “Water can be both helpful and healing, contributing to the good state of society, but at the very same time it may become inappropriate, malicious or harmful, due to new contexts or different considerations” (Hahn 2012: 39). Hahn suggests finding out why and how the differences between certain kinds of water, like being either good or bad, are performed. He further points out that “water provides a space for distinctions, which in many cases are not correlated with any particular kind of water as such, but to the intentions of the people dealing with water” (ibid.).

These considerations concerning water are the starting point for this chapter. In three respects, water was and is a central actor in the everyday life of the residents of the housing project: water is consumed, firstly, as food, and secondly, as a cleaning agent. Furthermore, water is experienced as a force of nature. In other words, not all water is the same. A distinction is made

between potable water, domestic water and rain, ground or seawater. The practices and experiences involved in these different types of water also vary. As food and cleaning agent, water is a basic need that has to be consumed in a certain amount. As natural force in the form of rain, water is less a need but a *disturbance* of everyday routines. For informal settlers, rainwater can become a threat for their existence depending on its force and the condition of their dwellings. In the housing project, on the contrary, rainwater is considered a blessing because water turned out to be a scarcity. Hence, through moving to the housing project, the way in which the residents perceive water has transformed as an effect of the different living conditions. While ground water used to be a free and easily available resource, it has now become a problem. While rain used to be a force of nature, it has become a blessing from God. The reasons for this are the topic of the next section.

5.2.1 THE EFFECTS OF DIFFERENT WATER SUPPLY SYSTEMS

Ate Belen: [Before, water] was close by. It seems it wasn't a problem because there was a deep well. It's not the same like here you know, because if there is no water you really have a problem. It is ok when it rains, but no rain no water, then you have to go there to the road to fetch it (Interview December 2, 2011, p. 6).

As pointed out by Ate Belen, the residents of the housing project perceive the availability of water as a *problem*. In contrast to their former dwelling environments, there is no (free) water source within close reach. Despite the sanitary facilities in the house, the community had not yet been supplied with running water for two main reasons. It was envisioned by the NGO to connect the housing project to the municipal water grid. Therefore the NGO has been in negotiations with the municipal water supply company since the beginning of the project. The problem, however, is that the area in which the housing project is located has yet to be supplied with water pipes and delays in construction have been foreseeable for some time. In July 2011, after three years of waiting, the NGO finally abandoned its plans. The completion of the municipal water grid was further delayed and the costs turned out to be more expensive than originally expected.

The fact that households would not be connected to the municipal water grid did not pose a major problem for the residents, as they were used to supplying themselves with well water. However, there were no wells inside the housing project. This is actually what caused the major problem. Even though wells present a common form of water supply in the Philippines, in the initial construction plans of the housing project, the NGO decided against the construction of wells for two reasons. First, due to political struggles between the NGO and local authorities,

the housing project was denied the permission for the construction of wells on the site. Secondly, the quality of the ground water of Mactan Island is classified as poor due to a blending of sea and ground water. Furthermore, the NGO was concerned that the ground water might be of poor quality or even contaminated because of the dumpsite situated in the close neighborhood and therefore could pose the risk of diseases for the residents. These are the main reasons why there is neither a municipal nor a well water supply inside the housing project after three years of development. For the residents this means that they have sanitary facilities inside the house, but no water.

In other words, since the first houses were completed in 2008, not a single drop of water has run through the installed water pipes and drains. Only the drainage system is in use. Instead, the residents have to acquire water from an external source and then need to store it in containers for their daily use because of the distance to the water source. Due to the missing water supply, access to water is a central topic in the everyday life in the housing project: in conversations, daily routines, and development plans. In response not only to the absence of water but also to the availability of indoor sanitary facilities, the residents have adapted their habituated water consumption practices to the new conditions of the house and thus developed a distinct form of water consumption that has given shape to the specific social aesthetics of the housing project. These water consumption strategies are the topic of this chapter. While I already outlined transitional effects on practices of body hygiene affected by the indoor sanitary facilities in the previous chapter, I now analyze the impact of the lack of a running water supply and how it makes a difference in my research partners' water consumption practices. In order to better understand these differences, I briefly describe the conditions of the water supply in squatter areas and dumpsite settlements and then those in the housing project. Afterwards I outline in detail the residents' strategies of bridging the gap in the water supply infrastructure.

Informal Water Supply System in Squatter Areas and Dumpsite Settlements

In squatter areas and dumpsite settlements, deep wells ensure the water supply for informal settlers. Usually there are several deep wells in a settlement only a few meters away from the settlers' dwellings. One of the reasons for the good provision of informal settlements with deep wells are local politicians. In election campaigns, they make use of the construction of deep wells in squatter settlements to secure the votes of urban poor informal settlers.

Due to the absence of indoor sanitary facilities, informal settlers mainly consume water outdoors. Only as nutrition, water is consumed inside the house. Well water is usually shared by the people living close-by and has the advantage that it can be acquired for free. It is mainly

used as domestic water for bathing, washing clothes and cleaning dishes. These cleaning practices are generally performed right at the water source, so that the water only needs to be fetched from the well but not transported to the house. The short distance to the deep well makes it possible to acquire water with only little effort in portable quantities such as in a 5 to 10 l bucket when the need arises.

In the squatter areas and dumpsite settlements I visited during my fieldwork, I gained the following impression: Even though squatter settlements have several deep wells, many people also use them at the same time. Therefore wells and the area around them are usually dirty and covered in waste, as the people cannot keep the area clean. The high population of squatter settlements together with the lack of sanitary facilities and waste disposal systems cause this pollution. Compared to that of squatter areas, I experienced the situation in dumpsite settlements as better. Dumpsite settlements are less densely populated in comparison with squatter settlements. They look rather like rural villages, if you ignore the black and muddy ground covered in plastic waste. The dumpsite settlers seemed to be concerned to keep the area around the deep wells as clean as possible under the given circumstances.

Besides well water, squatter areas and dumpsite settlements sometimes also have access to municipal water (MC) thanks to their locations in urban interspaces. If at all, urban poor commonly consume MC water only as nutrition for drinking and cooking, as it has to be bought. My research partners told me that they only bought it in small quantities from neighboring households with an MC connection. MC water, like water from a well, is not purified and therefore poses a risk of diseases. The only safe drinking water is the so-called purified or mineral water that can be bought in gallons.

These observations show that there are different kinds of water involved in everyday activities. There is water used for nutrition and there is water used for cleaning practices. As nutrition, water needs to be clean to avoid the risk of diseases. Thus, it needs to be treated. In this process it becomes part of humans' material culture and is transformed from a natural good into a commodity. For urban poor, the commodification of potable water is a problem because it increases their daily living expenses. In order to keep the daily living expenses low, urban poor refrain from buying purified drinking water and rather use well water or MC water for drinking and cooking. They then add iced water to improve its taste.¹¹⁵

In the housing project, the conditions of the water supply are different compared to that in the squatter settlements for two main reasons:

¹¹⁵ The production of iced water and ice candy is a *sideline* for households with electricity connection and a refrigerator. It is sold in 1l plastic bags for one peso.

- (1) The houses are equipped with indoor sanitary facilities (toilet, shower, sink) and a water pipeline system. What is missing, however, is the supply with running water.
- (2) There is no water source in the entire housing site. The nearest public well is located outside the housing project in about 500 m distance from the entrance gate.

As already outlined in chapter 5.1.4, the indoor sanitary facilities now make it possible to perform cleaning and hygienic activities inside the house, namely in the CR or in the kitchen area, offering visual privacy, a clean environment and the facilities to dispose of wastewater. When using sanitary facilities, water is a cleaning agent in two senses. It does not only clean the body or the materials but at the same time the facilities, i.e. in order to properly maintain the water infrastructure and to keep it clean, water is needed too. This is especially the case for the toilet.

As a result of transferring cleaning practices indoors (cf. 5.1.4), it becomes apparent that in the housing project the demand for water increases significantly in contrast to before in the squatter area. The indoor sanitary facilities create the need to consume water at or inside the house for cleaning practices, which they before performed right at the water source. This would not be a problem if water was available easily either by a running water supply or by a well in close distance. However, as this was not the case at the time of my, the *homepartners* had to bridge the gap in the water supply system themselves.

5.2.2 WALAY TUBIG - STRATEGIES OF BRIDGING THE GAP IN THE WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM

Before I moved to the housing project, my research assistant informed me that I would need buckets, containers and washing pans for kitchen and bathroom and a barrel for outside the house. Furthermore, I would need a dipper – a proper one or any small plastic container (like an empty plastic packaging of ice-cream or a cut of bottle) – to transfer water from one container to another, to flush the toilet and for taking a shower. What I did not know then was where the water would actually come from. Bella only said “buying water is expensive” and “when it rains at night you will get up“. I asked her “why?” - wondering if the rain makes so much noise on the corrugated sheet roof. However, she answered, “No, it is because you will go outside and collect the water as everybody else does it“.

If there is no water from the faucet, where does it come from and how does it find its way into the houses? This is the topic of the following sections. The analysis focuses again on the interrelation of the people and the respective material conditions of their dwelling environments, i.e. in past and present. It will show how domestic water becomes commodified on the one hand,

and on the other, how my research partners' perception and value of water transforms due to their altered living conditions. I start with the consumption of potable water and then outline the three different practices for the appropriation of domestic water.

Consumption of Potable Water

Potable water is water that people only use for drinking, cooking and brushing teeth. The most common and popular form of potable water is purified water that has been mechanically treated to make it suitable for use. So-called *Purified Drinking Water* filling stations sell purified water in re-usable gallons (18,9l) for which a deposit is paid. The next filling station is approximately 1 km away from the housing project. Here, a gallon of purified water costs 18 pesos. In the housing project, the cooperative store and a private local vendor¹¹⁶ also offer purified water. While the cooperation store sells a gallon for the price of 21 pesos¹¹⁷ the local vendor charges 25 pesos. Both suppliers also offer mineral water in small quantities; i.e. water is refilled in containers brought along by the customer. The practice of refilling and buying in small quantities corresponds with the strategy of 'living out of the pocket'. The advantage of buying purified water at the cooperation store or at the local vendor is that, despite its higher price, it can be hand-carried home, while buying the cheaper water from the filling station is linked to a means of transport that most residents do not have.

When I bought drinking water for the first time, Nigel, the elected chair of the cooperative and a part-time tricycle driver from the community, drove me to the 'Purified Drinking water' filling station. I bought two filled gallons for which I also paid a deposit. That was the first and only time that I bought water there. Afterwards, I always bought drinking water from the local vendor. She instructed me to write my name on the gallons in order to prevent mixing-up of gallons from the neighborhood. When I was in need of water, I dropped the empty gallon at her house and thus placed an order. After a day or two, I passed by the vendor's house to check if the gallon had been refilled already and to pick it up. If I was urgently in need of water, she offered me one of her private gallons, of which she most often had a few in stocks. She usually refused to let me carry it myself, saying Ayaw na! Ako na lang kay bugat kaayo! – Let me do it, it is too heavy. If she was busy, she asked her oldest daughter or her husband to deliver it to my house. Indeed, carrying a water gallon is not easy. Sometimes I accepted her offer. Sometimes I did it myself. If I managed, I tried to shoulder it. If not, I carried it home by holding the neck of the gallon with one hand, switching sides every now and then on the way. My decision to buy water from the local vendor was, first of all, motivated by saving physical effort and not money because her house was situated about halfway between my place and the cooperation store; and secondly, because I developed a good relationship with her and her family. My neighbor complained about the high price the private vendor charged for a gallon of mineral water. Therefore, she usually bought water from the cooperation store. There was also an economic incentive for the residents to buy water from the cooperation store instead of buying it from the local vendor because it is based on a so-called patronal refund system. The vendors of the store record every purchase in a notebook, noting the name and amount of the purchase.

¹¹⁶ She runs a small-scale business in the community. At the local meeting point situated under a big acacia tree, the only shade providing spot in the community, she sells barbecue, snacks, self-made juice and water filled in plastic bags. Her business hours are not fixed and depend on her personal scheduling and on the quantity of her range of items. She also sells water gallons which she stores and sells from her house.

¹¹⁷ The water gallons are more expensive than the ones sold in the store because she has to give a share to the cooperation. The selling price of goods sold in the housing project is generally 25% higher than the purchase price to generate a surplus/ an income for the cooperation.

Depending on the total annual revenue, the residents then receive a percentage of the profits at the end of the year.

A simple plastic water dispenser facilitates the consumption of water from a water gallon. Here, the gallon is lifted and put into the dispenser upside down. The water can then be tapped easily. Lifting the gallon into the dispenser requires a level of dexterity: It takes speed and strength to place the open mouth of the gallon into the dispenser without spilling the water. At first, I needed the help of the vendor to do it. But then, I practiced it myself so then I was capable to do it, I could also help Ate Lorna to do it when her daughters were not around. The water dispenser needed to be cleaned regularly. Not only of dirt but also of mosquito larvae who otherwise contaminate the water.

The consumption of purified water is important to prevent sickness especially for the poor who literally cannot afford to become sick, as already pointed out in the previous chapters. However, as it should have become apparent, purified drinking water is a commodity. It has to be purchased and thus becomes exclusive. It excludes people from access who are not able to pay for it. Urban poor therefore rely on domestic water for drinking and cooking despite the risk of sickness, as Jemma explains:

Jemma: The water we use for drinking is the one from the Astro tank, not the mineral water. [...] It was what we were used to before the discovery of mineral water. We used water from the tank to make ice water and sell it to the people but we stopped doing it during the cholera outbreak at that time. People were having stomach upset during the time of heavy rain. Diarrhea was also rampant here before because they say Lapu Lapu is near the dumpsite and the water seems contaminated after the heavy rains so we used mineral water instead. [...] Yes that's why it was an issue here in Lapu Lapu before so we stopped using the deep well water in the dumpsite for drinking because people got sick (Interview July 19, 2011, p. 11-12).

Jemma's statement reveals the severe risks imposed by groundwater if it is consumed for drinking. However, it presents a possibility to save money and thus to keep daily expenses low. This leads me to the consumption of domestic water.

In the housing project, the residents use three kinds of sources to obtain domestic water, two of which are free of charge and are thus the most preferred ones. In the following, I will describe these three kinds of water acquisition and discuss how the practices involved shape the value of the water.

Kawos og Tubig sa Tabay - Fetching Water from the Deep Well

The first and most popular source for water acquisition is the next public deep well. It is situated outside the housing site at the intersection to the dumpsite. Depending on the location of the

house of the residents, it is a distance of 600 to 800m. In the squatter settlements, the next deep well was usually situated within a radius of some 50m maximum.

When the residents fetch water from the deep well, they first have to cross the local road. The traffic on the road mainly consists of *traysikats*, *traysikuls* and garbage trucks. Only a few private cars and pedestrians use the street. The deep well at the intersection is mainly used by families dwelling along the road and by the residents of the housing project. The well is sealed and equipped with a hand pump.

A division of labor characterizes the acquisition of water from the well. Mainly men are responsible for the acquisition and transport of water from the well, while collecting rainwater is a woman's task. Children are also involved in the acquisition of water. From the age of four, children accompany older siblings or their parents to fetch water from the well. Children usually walk back and forth to the well. As means of transport, they use buckets or plastic bottles. Every day I observed children with containers going up and down the street. When the container was filled with water, they often stopped to place it on the ground for a moment before continuing their journey.

Mel: Who is in charge of fetching water?

Regina: It can be me and it also can be him, but since we live here, he does not fetch the water anymore. Because I think that his body is exhausted therefore I do not approach him I just rent a traysikat and ask his brother, the child of Alan, for help. Then we rent a traysikat at least if I have money (Interview November 28, 2011, p. 61).

As Regina emphasized, acquiring water in the housing project often becomes the task of housewives, especially when the husband is not at home during the day. In her case, her husband still works on the dumpsite. That is why he usually stays in the dumpsite settlement during the week and only comes home on weekends to save travel costs and to take care of the collected recyclables until he sells them on Saturdays. Regina's statement further reveals that even though water from the well is generally for free, costs arise if a means of transport is necessary and needs to be rented. Thus, the acquisition of water with the help of a rented vehicle becomes a matter of money. I will return to this aspect later on.

Another technique practiced to transport water from the deep well is by bicycle. Three men mainly practice this technique. They put one to three water containers on the bike frame between saddle and handlebar. I watched them riding/cycling back and forth several times at varying speed. While they rode quickly through the community on their way to the deep well, their speed was reduced on their way back home. Packed with full water containers, they rode focused trying not to lose balance because of the movement of the water in the containers.

Regularly, I saw one man who was already in his mid-sixties. Several times a day, he fetched water from the deep well. When I first saw him, he used a traditional yoke with a 10l bucket on each side. Then he bought a *traysikat* with which he then fetched the water from the deep well. Instead of the buckets, he now used up to six water gallons, which he transported on the passenger seats of his vehicle. Since then, he has only gone once a day.

To experience what it means to fetch water from the deep well outside the community, I once accompanied my assistant, her sister and the two youngest children of the family living next door.

For several days it did not rain. On the surface of the water left in my rain barrel there is a layer of dust and leafs and first mosquito larvae are moving inside. It is six o'clock shortly before sunset. Even though it seems as if it might be raining soon, Nikita and Lara get prepared to fetch water from the deep well outside the community. They load the sidecar of their traysikat with a water drum and three five-liter containers. Gino and Alice, the two youngest children of the family living next door, are also getting prepared. Together we start our walk to the deep well. As we live in the last row of the west wing of the housing project, the walk takes about 5-10 minutes. Two thirds of the road consists of gravel with lots of potholes. Outside the community walls just before the entrance gate of the tissue company the road is paved. Gino and Lara ride the traysikats and we walk right beside them. On our way through the community we meet a friend who decides to accompany us. Neighbors passing by keep greeting me in the local manner asking 'asa man ka', where do you go? And I answer 'kawos ug tubig' – fetching water. The response to my answer is either irritation or amusement.

When we arrive at the deep well, there is a hustle and bustle. An elderly man is busy filling a container. He operates the pump without making a face. When pumping the water, there is an even composition of the sounds of squeaking metal and rushing water flowing into the container under the pump. We wait till the man has finished, standing around, watching and waiting till it is our turn. In front of us there are two men in their early twenties. 'Halla... Americana' – they cry out. My appearance at the well seems to surprise them. Amused they look over to us, whispering and giggling. While we are waiting for our turn, children start gathering around us observing what we do. Then, finally, it is our turn. Gino starts first. He positions the opening of a canister under the head of the pump where the neck of a plastic bottle is fixed. Then he places one of the empty containers under the handle, steps on it and starts operating the pump. The fixed bottleneck generates a straight stream of water shooting with great accuracy into the opening of the container with each movement of the handle. After Gino, I take my turn to operate the pump. I start to operate the handle with my right hand. After a short while, I can already feel the physical exertion in my right arm. With each pump-movement I feel a prickling in my arm. It is not my first time going to the deep well. When I accompanied Nikita and her mother the last time, Ate Lorna refused my help as usual. "Ayaw na Mel, namo na lang" - Don't bother about it Mel, let just us do it. This reaction I always receive when offering help and physical work is involved.

After one and a half containers, I feel like I need a break so Dodo takes over. Dodo starts pumping, demonstrating to us how 'strong' and 'experienced' he is. He only uses two fingers to operate the handle of the pump. After him, Nikita's sister takes her turn. While she fills the last container, we start loading the sidecars of the traysikats. The containers and especially the drum are very heavy. We help each other lifting.

Filling the container took about 15 minutes and we had to wait for about five minutes for our turn at the pump. Now, it is already after sunset and the sky starts to turn dark. With two fully filled traysikats we make our way back home. In twos, we carefully push the traysikats down the slight slope from the platform of the deep well to the road watching out for by passers. There is not a lot of traffic at this time of the day. But there is still garbage trucks supplying the Material Recycling Facility. Beside the trucks, there are mainly pedestrians and traysikat drivers travelling up and down the road with or without passengers.

On the road, Gino and I jump on the traysikats racing each other back to the community cheered by Nikita, Lara, Dodo and Alice. I find it hard to pedal. The bicycle has the size of a BMX bike. The saddle is low so that I cannot stretch my legs to push the pedals with force. My knees constantly hit the handlebars. The filled water containers give the sidecar a dynamic of its own, which makes it

difficult to steer. Our race ends just before the break-off edge of the paved road, 50 m in front of the entrance gate of the community. The traysikat has no brakes. Therefore, we have to quickly bring our vehicles to stop with our feet so as not to run over the edge and down the gravel road unbraked. Some traysikats have a kind of mudguard on the rear wheel made of used tires. They use it as brake by pushing it down on the rear wheel with the arch of the foot. Because I do not master this technique I try to just brake with my feet by pushing them hard on the ground. The weight of the containers and the moving of the water make the braking process even more difficult. Finally, I manage to halt just before the break-off edge. Powerless, all sweaty and with trembling legs I alight from the bicycle. Nikita and Lara take over the traysikat pushing it slowly over the break-off edge and down the slope. The water is moving heavily in the canisters. In the meanwhile, the cloud cover above us has become dense. Suddenly, it starts bucketing down with rain. Dodo jumps on our traysikat and starts driving. Nikita, Lara and I follow him running through the rain. The running places me into the next difficult situation of this event because I am wearing – as common in the Philippines – tsinilas (sandals). Just walking in tsinilas is already a challenge for me, therefore running seems impossible. But the rain drives me forward. While running, I feel how the centre belt starts carving into the flesh between my toes and I have the feeling of losing my shoes any moment. My Filipino comrades, in contrast, seem to have no problems at all with running in tsinilas, sprinting away. Halfway to shelter, we are already totally soaked. We give up running and decide to rather enjoy the warm rain shower and to take a bath outdoors like the children do it around us (Weekly Report No.8, Monday, June 20, 2011).

For activities like bathing, washing clothes and dishes and flushing the toilet, a household in the housing project consumes a minimum of approximately 80l of water a day. When I went fetching water with my neighbors' children, we fetched about 80l for two families. The relatively high amount of water was possible because we took a water drum with us, which we had to lift with two people. Despite the physical effort involved, my research partners described acquiring water from the deep well as convenient insofar as the water is for *free*. However, it is a time-consuming activity and involves physical effort and skills, certain materials and, if a large quantity of water is to be transported, a means of transportation. While fetching water from a deep well is a common household chore in the Philippines, the difficulty for the residents of the housing project arises out of the distance to the deep well and from the amount of water needed to satisfy the daily water consumption in the house.

Therefore, a *traysikat* enables the residents to transport larger quantities of water and thus to fetch water less often, like only once a day or every two days. Most families in the community do not have their own *traysikat*. Thus, they rent it from a neighbor for 10-20 pesos.

Chesa: It is ok, because it is to transport water, when there is the truck, we use the truck as well.

Mel: But one barrel only costs 35.

Chesa: Yyes, but when we rent a traysikat you can get as much as you want, so you can get much more when you fetch it yourself, there is no limit of hours for the traysikats. The difference is just that it is more exhausting and very heavy. Sometimes it is only me, no help of my husband because he is still at work (Interview November 8, 2011, p. 18-19).

In this statement, three central aspects involved in the acquisition of water from the deep well become apparent:

(1) It is *kapoy* and *bug-at kaayo* meaning ‘exhausting’ and ‘very heavy’. It requires the extensive use of the body for walking or riding the bicycle to the deep well, for operating the pump and for transporting the water back home.

(2) Because of the increased amount of water needed at the house the residents fetch water several times a day or make use of a means of transportation (like a bicycle or *traysikat*) in order to fetch a large quantity of water, but less often.

(3) If a means of transportation is necessary and has to be rented, access to domestic water becomes *a matter of money*, not for the water itself but for the means of transportation. Thus, in this process of acquiring domestic water, the value of water transforms from a freely available natural resource to an economic value.

Notwithstanding the mentioned aspects, some residents prefer renting a *traysikat* for the provision of water instead of acquiring water from a water delivery service offered and managed by the cooperative because the costs involved only refer to the *traysikat* and not to the acquired quantity of water. This attitude towards water acquisition already indicates how the residents deal with the new living conditions in the housing project with respect to water consumption. They develop strategies to acquire a large amount of water for the lowest possible expenses. This is especially the case for those who struggle to meet the financial challenges involved in the everyday life of the housing project.

Ate Jonell: Before we constantly fetched water but then I felt sorry for my husband because always when he came home he fetched water. What about the body? Therefore we now just buy water even though I am still hapless with water. Really, we just endure it to buy water (Interview December 21, 2011, p. 47).

A water delivery services organized and managed by the cooperative offers an alternative for the provision of domestic water. In the following, I will refer mainly to the interview with Ate Jonell, the so-called water official. Through her I learned about the different facets of the communal water supply.

Palit og Tubig sa Truck – Buying Water from a Water Supplier

The provision of water by a house delivery by truck is a livelihood initiative of the cooperative. For this business, the cooperative established a small-scale income-generating activity carried out by the so-called *water official*. The water official manages the house-to-house delivery, i.e. s/he accepts orders from residents, orders the truck delivery, instructs the truck drivers, supervises the delivery, calculates the prices and collects the money.

The day or the time of a water supply is not fixed because it depends on the demand of the residents. The demand is in turn significantly influenced by the condition of the weather: The less it rains the higher is the demand for water or the more it rains the less is the demand. That there is a water delivery on a certain day, I usually only found out in the moment of its arrival by the sound of the engine: ¹¹⁸

It is shortly after 8 am and I can hear the noise of an engine. It sounds like a slowly approaching truck. About ten minutes later the water tanker reaches the dead-end beside my house where it stops. The noise of the engine fades. Shortly afterwards, a different mechanical noise occurs. This time it sounds more like a humming noise. The noise sounds familiar, evoking the image of a diesel generator or lawnmower in my mind. There is another noise accompanying the sound of the engine. It sounds like rushing water. The noise of the water is much softer and less obtrusive than the humming of the engine of the water pump, which vibrates through my house dominating the whole soundscape. Suddenly, I hear someone shouting 'hoy, hoy,...hey' and promptly, the engine becomes silent. [...] Even though the tanker has already made its way to the feeding place about 50m away from my house, the humming sound of the engine still vibrates in the road and in my house. At least it becomes more silent with every intersection the tanker is moving away from the dead-end. The growing distance becomes perceptible by the sounds of chatting people in the street and at the feeding place, first mixing with the noise of the engine and finally replacing it fully. After the truck has finally left the community, the usual calmness of the morning is restored. The atmosphere in the surroundings of my house feels peaceful again, characterized by a soundscape that is dominated by voices of chatting people, some playing children and the occasional crowing of cocks living in the surroundings outside the community walls (Weekly Report, No. 15, Thursday, August 9, 2011).

Two men are in charge of the delivery. One man operates the water hose of the tanker, carrying it from house to house to fill the different containers. The second man operates the water pump of the tanker. On call, he starts or stops the motor of the pump. If someone wants to buy water s/he informs the water official in the moment of delivery. Equipped with a straw hat as protection for the sun and a notebook, the water official accompanies the water suppliers. The notebook serves to document the sale of the water in a tabular form. First, the water official assigns a number to the buyer in ascending order. In the following columns, s/he writes down the name, the quantity of water served or the kind or size of the container and the amount to be paid. After the payment, the client signs in the last column of the table and hence completes the purchasing process. With the next client, this process starts anew. Supplying the whole community, consisting of 150 households, with water takes about three hours and two tanks of water, according to the water official. In times of no rain for days or weeks, the house-to-house water delivery was organized one or two times a week.

At the time of my fieldwork, the delivery of one tank of water cost PhP 500.00. The water official determined the prices according to the size of the container used for the storing of water.

¹¹⁸ Usually, there are only three types of trucks coming into the community. These are first of all the so-called *Elve*. The *Elve* is owned by the cooperative and is mainly used for the recycling-livelihood-project. Secondly, the truck of the scrub buyer coming to the community on Saturdays to pick up segregated recyclable materials, and thirdly the water tanker.

A barrel of water (approx. 120 Liter) was determined PhP 35.00,¹¹⁹ a tub PhP 10.00 and a bucket or gallon depending on the size PhP 4.00 or 5.00.

During the interview we also talked about the process of the water distribution and the different containers people make use of for storing water:

Ate Jonell: Some use a barrel, others buckets or gallons for mineral water, still others use containers. They are assorted, because if you do not have a barrel, you have to put up with a smaller container. Therefore, I itemized the different kinds to determine the prize for the different quantities. If I would not do that, the cooperative would receive no share because they pay a fixed price for the tank. Therefore, I determine fixed prices too, and I keep following (?), going from one to the next, it's very tiring. And then, if there is no share for the cooperative, really, if there is a share for the cooperative there is also something for me. Therefore, I make sure that a lot of people buy water so that there will be something for me and as well for the cooperative. If it is difficult for some, I tell them, you can buy on credit because I understand. It was said that no credit for buying water but I have sympathy with the people because imagine you have water and then your neighbor has also water but what shall the people use if they don't have water? Water is important. That is the reason why I tell them, I give you credit, but don't tell anyone because it is forbidden to give credit but I do it because I feel pity for you, I can understand you. But please pay me back soon, but they will pay, so it's ok. [...] how can it not be to have sympathy when we have water and our neighbors do not have water, they come and say no credit but I feel pity, I give credit because I feel pity, I feel pity with the people who do not have water, but there are others they know that I give credit. They do not think about buying and then I go to them to collect the amount, I keep going there, and I think well, that is also pitiful I am a fool, am I not? I gave them water and then when I come to collect the amount, you say I already spent all my money, am I not pitiful, and the next time I come you say oops, I already spent all my money I forgot about it, so I keep on coming back. I just say well it's ok I just put up with it because what can we do about it (Interview December 21, 2011, pp. 56-57).

In the position of the water official, Ate Jonell acts as intermediary between the water supplier, the cooperative and her neighbors, who become her clients. Owing to her position, she experiences a sphere of influence and power regarding the method of payment. She makes use of her position insofar as she offers purchase on credit.¹²⁰ Herewith, she decides and accepts to violate the community policies prohibiting this method of payment. She justifies her decision with two arguments. The first argument is economically driven: The more people buy water, the higher is the income of the cooperative and herewith her share. Secondly, she argues from an emotional point of view: She feels empathy with those neighbors who are excluded because of a lack of financial resources, which creates a difference between the neighbors. On a different infrastructural level, she makes the same daily experiences as her neighbors: being deprived of the comfort of electricity¹²¹ because of the lack of financial means. Therefore, she identifies with them and feels pity for them: “*malooy ko sa mga tawo nga walay tubig*” meaning ‘I feel sorry for the people who don't have water’. However, the consequence of her behavior supporting neighbors in need is a concrete personal financial loss on the one hand, and produces frustration and a

¹¹⁹ To give a comparison to other costs of living: A barrel of water costs the same as a kilo of rice, the major staple food of the people.

¹²⁰ Purchase on credit is a common method of payment in the Philippines, especially in the informal sector.

¹²¹ Since Ate Jonell and her family moved into the community, they have lived without electricity because they lack the financial means to pay the initial connection fee.

feeling of helplessness or powerlessness on the other hand if people do not repay their debts. In consideration of the financial situation of most of her clients, the limitedness of her power becomes apparent as she lacks means of pressure to demand payment. The reason for this might be the violation of the payment policies and the involved risks she takes for offering payment on credit: namely the risk of losing her position as water official, and the risk of receiving a warning that can under certain circumstances lead to the eviction from the housing project. These are the set consequences for violating community policies. That she is aware of these risks becomes apparent between the lines of her statement, when she instructs her clients: “*pero ayaw ninyo isaba-saba*” meaning ‘but don’t to tell anyone’.

As payment for the management of the water delivery, the water official receives a 15% share of the total profits of the water sale at the end of the month. Percentage shares on revenues of livelihood projects of the cooperative are a common form of payment in the housing project. However, typical are 25%. During the interview with the water official, we talked about the process of the water distribution and its revenues. She explained that the cooperative earned about 4000 pesos in the period of June to September. Thus, her income amounts PhP 600.00. I asked her how she feels about the percentage share and she answered:

Ate Jonell: It's ok because that is what they (the cooperative) have agreed upon. I just accept it because, God beware, having no income at all. Dodong (nickname for her eldest son) sometimes tells me to quit. But for me at least I have a little income. If I would only rely on my husband, it would be so pitiful; because how much is the income of my husband, it is only very low (Interview December 21, 2011, p. 19).

The position of the water official enables my research partner to have a small side income and thus financially support her family. However, as it should become apparent, it is only a small compensation for her efforts. As it was already the topic in the previous chapter, the people’s two main challenges involved in the transition process are to assert themselves economically and socially in the housing project.

Ate Hilda: We have difficulties now because we have expenses. Before we did not have any expenses. [...] We did not have to pay for the water we used for washing and bathing because it came from the deep well. The only thing we had to pay for was drinking water. Here it is different: if it doesn't rain we have to buy everything (Interview December 16, 2011, p. 6).

Like Ate Hilda, residents often pointed out that in the housing project they now have to pay for everything. Not like before in the squatter areas, where their niche existence supposedly allowed them free access to certain resources like domestic water or buying on credit.

In this kind of water acquisition, the gap in the water infrastructure is overcome through a service system implemented by the cooperation. The service system creates a scope of functions and a division of paid labor. This system is in itself a small-scale infrastructure meshing into

the physical infrastructure of the housing project. Out of this implemented small-scale infrastructure a space of interaction develops for the water official regarding the communal payment policy and individual habits.

Infrastructure, as becomes apparent in this example, facilitates the reciprocal flow of commodities for money and through an implemented service system based on policies to process the flow properly. On the micro level of the housing project this leads to the development of a space of interaction and making use of a certain power to achieve one's own interests driven by personal needs, not only on the side of the water official but as well on the side of the clients. For supplying the households with water, in this case the water suppliers and the water official are the ones who enable the flow of water. Water in this case becomes a commodity due to the inserted service system. Compared to obtaining water from the deep well, purchasing water from the truck is more expensive but saves physical effort and is less time-consuming for the purchaser.

From my research partners' perspective, the truck delivery is the most convenient way to acquire water for the daily consumption. Not only that the water is delivered right to the door; it is also possible to acquire a large quantity of water. The quantity purchased from the truck in turn depends either on the capacity of water a household is able to store, their available financial means, or the prospect of a rain shower. However, even though a water delivery is the most convenient way, it is also the most expensive one compared with what the residents would pay for municipal water, which however was not yet available, or with fetching water from the deep well. From my perspective, I have to admit that the water delivery is indeed comfortable, but I also did not like to rely on it. First because the quality of the tank water is different from that of the well and the rain. It felt pretty hard compared to rainwater and seemed to have an oily surface. And second because the delivery is unpredictable. In this respect I felt like my neighbors and was happy about every rain shower, even at night.

Sawod og Ulan - Gathering Rainwater

Ate Jonell: For washing and for the toilet it is good when it constantly rains because then you don't have problems with water and if there is no rain it is always difficult (Interview December 21, 2011, p. 46).

Gathering rainwater presents the third way of the provision with domestic water. Rainwater is – as highlighted with Ate Jonell' statement– the most popular water source of the residents of the housing project because it is delivered free to the house. It only has to be *gathered*. However, this form of water acquisition is also the most unreliable one, except in monsoon season.

During rain showers, there is a hustle and bustle in the housing project. When dark and thick clouds gather over the community and the first raindrops announce a forthcoming rain shower, mainly the women get prepared for collecting the rain. Each house in the housing project is equipped with a roof drainage system with gutters and rainwater downspouts, which make the collection of rainwater possible. Before they start collecting the water, the women wait 5 to 10 minutes. The first rain is considered dirty because of the dust in the air and sedimented dirt in the rain gutters. During heavy rain showers – which are quite common in the Philippines, especially in monsoon season – a large quantity of water can principally be collected at relatively low physical effort and no direct costs are involved. However, rain showers are not predictable in the sense that the daily use of water can be totally relied on this resource because neither the houses nor the housing project are provided with cisterns. The quantity of rainwater that can be gathered depends on the one hand on the quantity of the available containers of a household and on the other hand on the intensity of a rain shower. If it is *taliksik lang* (only drizzling) only little or no water can be collected.

To be able to collect rainwater, the downspouts are cut off at about 1 to 1.50 m above ground level, at least high enough to place a container underneath. In general, collecting rainwater is practiced in the following way: The largest available container is placed under the end of the downspout. All others are placed right beside or around it. Due to the weight of a filled barrel, it cannot be moved to replace it by another empty container, e.g. buckets, gallons, jugs, or whatever the residents have and that can be used for storing water, like polystyrene boxes. Therefore, the water then is scooped out from the largest container and transferred into smaller ones. Most of the households have further containers inside the house – in bathroom and kitchen. These are filled first. Using a dipper, water is scooped into a bucket and carried inside. Afterwards, the remaining containers outside the house are filled next. A technique to fill more than one container without scooping is to fix a pipe bend at the end of the downspout to be able to channel/direct the stream of the water in more than one large container, if possible. However, the radius of containers that can be reached depends on the size of the containers and is limited by the space in front of the house and length of the pipe bend. A plastic bottle offers an alternative to a proper pipe bend. For this purpose, the bottle is cut in half. The bottleneck then is fixed either at the end of the spout or of the pipe bend to channel the water. Some of my neighbors put a sock over the end of the pipe or over the bottle mouth to *filter* the water.

At my neighbors place, I noticed one day a new technique to channel the water in as many containers as possible without scooping. For this purpose they fixed a cable channel usually used for electric wiring at the mouth of the plastic bottle and fixed it to the downspout:

Mel: What is the orange thing, what do you use it for?

Ate Lorna: Ah you mean that. If one [container] is full you don't have to scoop out the water, you just take it out and put it into the next container. [...] it was [my idea] (laughing) because always when one [container] is full, halla! you have to scoop and transfer it there to the next, it is not just like that you lift it and transfer it there to the side and then there is no other container... no, now when it is full you just transfer it, you don't have to constantly scoop ... you just wait till it is full.... [it is] tiring and you also get wet from the rain (Interview November 15, 2011, pp. 38-39).

This technique replaces the scooping and transferring of water, at least outside the house. Carrying buckets to fill the containers inside the house is still necessary. Households which only possess small containers that cannot be placed under the downspout, used a washing pan instead. With the help of a dipper, the water is scooped out and refilled into smaller containers. Once, I watched my host family collecting the water. The two daughters and their mother formed a chain. One scooped out the water into a bucket that she handed over to her sister. Her sister then carried it to the entrance door, where her mother took it and carried it inside to fill the buckets in the kitchen. She then returned the empty bucket to her daughter waiting in the doorway. She went back outside to her sister who in the meantime had already filled another bucket, which they then exchanged. In this way they created a water transport system made possible through the use of their bodies, buckets and a dipper.

Compared to fetching water from the deep well, collecting rainwater at first seems to require less physical effort. However, scooping and transferring water into the house is quite tiring, especially at night. Here, a special challenge involved in gathering rainwater becomes apparent, namely that rain showers can happen at any time of the day. Depending on rainwater demands the residents to get ready in the moment it starts to rain, even if it is midnight or early in the morning. Besides the physical effort involved it furthermore demands to expose oneself to the rain, as pointed out by Ate Lorna further above. Within minutes, one is completely soaking wet. I observed different techniques applied to protect oneself from the rain. Most neighbors made use of an umbrella, which makes transferring the water more complicated. In the 15th week of my stay in the housing project, I discovered that Ate Lorna and the other neighbor wore a kind of rain cape instead of using an umbrella. For the rain cape they made use of a large plastic sack. They used the bottom edge as hood. Thereby two thirds of their body were covered and protected from the rain. I usually wore my rain jacket when fetching rainwater. The rain jacket just reached over my hips so that my upper body was kept dry but my trousers and legs were always soaked, mainly because the rain ran down the rain jacket dripping on my trousers. To improve my *rain cover*, I wrapped a large towel around my hips to stay at least a little dryer.

My feet, however, always got wet and dirty from the muddy ground in front of the house. Entering the house and going inside with a filled 10l bucket in the hand and without slipping was a further challenge, because the cemented flooring is slippery when it gets wet.

To make the most of a rain shower, some women also use it to wash clothes even if it rains in the evening or at night. This means an extra physical effort.

Ate Jonell: Then if when it rains at 11 o'clock at night I do the washing, God beware that I am not here because what a big waste of water when it keeps flowing and I don't have any more container to fill in the water, I wash at night even when it is all dark.

Lori: That's also my plan ate when it rains because eventually the containers for the rainwater get full and overflow and it's such a waste but then they wonder about me because at times it's already late and it's pouring rain. It really is a waste to not seize the opportunity of washing the clothes when it's raining and I don't even mind or get scared when I'm doing it alone. If we don't conserve our resources we get poorer that's why we suffice on eating brine fish or dried fish or salted fish to save money yet we still aren't rich (Interview December 21, 2011, p. 46).

This short conversation between Ate Jonell and Lori reveals that gathering rain is mainly economically motivated as it presents a possibility for saving money. The necessity arises from the new living conditions of the housing project where domestic water is provided only as a commodity and thus creates a further new financial expense.

Besides the *delivery service for domestic water*, rain showers are furthermore appreciated because they offer a pleasant chilling from the tropical heat. This is the time where temperatures vary between 25°C and 28°C degrees during the day and night time instead of above 30°C degrees. Thus, this was considered the best time for taking a rest because *lami ang tulog kung bugnaw* meaning 'sleep tastes good when it is chilly'. For the children, a rain shower is also a welcome change in their playing. They run through the rain or place themselves under overflowing gutters to take an open air shower. The slide on the communal playground became a special attraction for the children as well as jumping through puddles on the basketball court. As soon as the rain shower stops, the teenage boys regain the court, removing the puddles with the help of a piece of plywood to continue their basketball game that was interrupted by the rain.

It should have become obvious that the context of the housing project affects a shift in how the residents now perceive and value rain. While my research partners experienced rain before rather as a *threat* for life, they now consider it a *blessing*. A fact explaining why my research partners call rain a *gift of God* they pray for.

Ate Jonell: But God is proficient because he knows when my water gets to an end, he lets it rain. Sometimes I say, what shall I do, we don't have any more water to use, only one more tab and then it rains, really, aw, he must have heard it [...] (Interview December 21, 2011, p. 47).

The heightened appreciation of rain shows in the moments it starts to rain. Especially during communal meetings or other events, the atmosphere changes dramatically. The participants lose their attention and the noise level in the room increases significantly. Finally, the rain shower leads to the interruption of meetings because the participants rush home to gather the rain. The same happened during my interviews. If it rained or it looked like rain before an interview, the interview was postponed in order to get prepared.

That means using up the last *old water* for washing clothes, cleaning out the containers for gathering *fresh water*. As I also relied on or more precisely appreciated rainwater more than water from the water tanker, I also interrupted interviews to gather rain.

In this section on water consumption practices I showed that in response to the new living conditions of the housing project, my research partners develop different strategies to bridge the gap in the water supply system and also to adapt habituated water consumption practices in response to the new needs triggered by the availability of indoor sanitary facilities. Out of these circumstances, the residents of the housing project have developed a distinct form of water consumption that – at the time of my fieldwork - gave shape to the specific social aesthetics of the housing project, through which differences between neighbors became tangible, creating a basis for negotiating social relations. This I briefly outline in the following.

5.2.3 THE SOCIAL AESTHETICS OF WATER CONSUMPTION

In his article “Social Aesthetics and the Doon School” (1999), MacDougall explains that there “are moments when the social world seems more evident in an object or a gesture than in the whole concatenation of our beliefs and institutions” (MacDougall 1999: 3). I also experienced such moments in the housing project, especially in connection with water consumption practices.

The conditions of the housing project, especially the state of the water infrastructure on the one hand and the communal policies on the other, create social differences between those residents who manage to assert themselves economically and those who do not. The commodification of water excludes those residents who lack the financial means to pay for water, except if the water official illegally offers them to buy on credit. They are deprived of a *comfortable* provision of domestic water by a tank delivery, which their new house with its indoor sanitary facilities did not only promise but also demands with regard to the amount of water which is needed daily. Here social differences are created and become perceivable in the aesthetics of the water infrastructure which is partly shaped by the provided material environment of the housing project

and partly by the practices and material objects introduced by the residents themselves. Social differences show in the different kinds and materials of containers used for storing (their material, form, quality and filling capacity) and in the different practices involved in the acquisition of water (either buying water from the truck or fetching water from the deep well, which is physically demanding and time-consuming, but the water is for free). On the surface, the aesthetics of the water infrastructure reveals a further social fact, namely the difference between those who are employed and those who are not. Those who are employed supposedly do not have the time to fetch water from the deep well but have the financial means to buy water from the truck, while those who are unemployed have the time to fetch water from the deep well. However, this is a rather general projection, which is much more complicated on the actual individual level of the different households.

- (1) As the water delivery is rather unpredictable, it has happened that households missed the delivery because they were not at home.
- (2) Those who are e.g. employed in one of the livelihood projects, like the water official, only earn a small income, which is not even enough to pay the monthly amortization, which is one of the major problems of the housing project itself.
- (3) Being an active member or even a leader in the BEC or cooperative requires a lot of voluntary commitment of the residents, namely time for which they are not paid.

is the latter point is a second major problem of the housing project, because it creates the discrepancy, especially for women, of either being a *member-in good-standing* (MIG) and foregoing an employment or of being a *member-not-in-good-standing* (NIG) and having an employment outside the housing project, which, however, does not automatically mean proper payment. Thus, due to the living conditions of the housing project, the acquisition of water becomes a *total social fact*, which it was not before, at least not on the level of *neighboring settlers*. This shows once again that the communal policies make a decisive difference between the past and present *lifeworlds* of the residents.

During my fieldwork I experienced firsthand how the lack of water supply made social differences perceptible between my neighbors and me. I will explain this in the following.

The Gift of Water

For my stay in the housing project, the NGO employees placed two rain barrels with a capacity of around 150l each at the model house for my water consumption. This put me in a lucky situation because – as it turned out over the following weeks – I was able to collect and store

more (rain-)water than I was able to consume before it would turn *dirty*.¹²² Having two rain barrels for a one-person-household is – as I found out after strolling around in the community – quite a luxury. For bathing, flushing the toilet and washing dishes and clothes I only consumed around 30 to 40 liters a day. In contrast, most of my neighboring households consisted of four to ten family members and thus had a much higher level of water consumption. For collecting and storing water, they used of a range of containers in different sizes ranging from 5 to 150 liters in capacity (only a few had a large plastic or metal barrel, however). These were commonly placed in front of the house, usually in close reach to the downpipe of the rain gutter, and inside the house in the kitchen and bathroom area. Thus, the kind and number of containers standing in front of the house to collect rainwater became a marker showing socio-economic differences between neighbors. In the following, I will outline this issue by taking the interaction with my neighbors as example.

In the relationship with three neighboring families, water became a central topic in our daily interaction, as the following entries from my weekly report show:

Monday, June 13, 2011: Bella informs me that I should no longer use the water in the rain barrel except for washing clothes or for flushing the toilet because there are mosquito larvae inside and the water is dirty. She asks Nanita if she wants to get some water. Nanita and Ate Carmela, both living next door, then empty my rain barrel and afterwards clean it out. I offer them my help but they reject saying “namo nalang” (i.e. we do it).

Sunday, June 19, 2011: Around 3.00 pm dark clouds come in and wind picks up, both promising rain. 30 minutes later, it starts to drizzle. In the hope for rain and fresh water, I empty my rain barrel with the help of Alice (Ate Carmela’s youngest daughter). The remaining water is dirty of mosquito larvae and dust. Unfortunately, it turned out to be only a slight rainfall so that now I have hardly any water left.

Monday, June 20, 2011: going for a walk with Nikita in the morning. Back home, Nikita offers me to get some of their water for taking a shower because my water is ‘dirty’ (Mosquito larvae, dust), in return her mother takes water from my rain barrel to wash their clothes.

Thursday, July 7, 2011: when I pass the house of Ate Josy I see her washing clothes on the back of her house. I ask her if she has enough water. She answers that she only has a little bit. I offer her to take water from my barrel. She thanks me and says that she will clean out the barrel afterwards adding that it is better to use the water before it turns bad. Even though I worry about having no water left for the weekend, I offer her the water. She often opens my barrel when it rains and so far I mainly offered the water to other neighbors.

Thursday, August 9, 2011: at 10.30 am, I leave my house to go to the Acacia tree. In front of my house, I meet Ate Josy and Ate Carmela. Ate Josy sits on a stool in front of her water containers and a plastic washing bowl filled with clothes. Ate Carmela stands beside her. They ask me if I still have rainwater in my barrel explaining that rainwater is ‘nindot’ (nice) to wash clothes especially for white linen. I take a look in my barrels. One is at least one third full of water. I offer them to take the water and continue my way to the Acacia tree. [...]. It is around 2.30 pm. I scoop out water from the container in the kitchen to do the dish washing in a washing bowl. The water turns out to be dirty. Mosquito larvae and dust swim in the remaining water. Thus, I first empty the container in the

¹²² The absence of a water source in the housing project and the increased need for water inside the house created the necessity to store water in and/or outside the house. At the beginning of my fieldwork, the scarcity of water at first evoked in me the attitude to minimize my water consumption. However, I quickly realized that saving water stored in containers – whether rainwater, water from the truck or from the deep well – is senseless due to the conditions of storing. Even if the containers can be covered by pieces of plywood, plastic foil, pieces of cloth etc., the water transforms after two to three days and turns *dirty* because of dust and dirt collecting on the water surface and insects appear in the water. At this point, the water is only good for washing clothes and flushing the toilet but no more for bathing.

kitchen. I pour out the rest of the water into the toilet and clean the inside wall of the container scrubbing of the dust with a hand brush. Then, I go outside to fetch water from the barrel. The barrel is still one third full of water. A couple of things are swimming on the ground of the barrel, which I identify as leaves, dust or sand crumbs and lifeless bodies of insects. It looks as if Ate Josy and Ate Carmela did not take any water. I scoop out water from the barrel. To avoid that a lot of the dirt finds its way into the dipper, I carefully and slowly press the dipper to the side of the barrel and slightly dip it into the water. The scooping creates a swirl through which the dirt in the water is stirred up. Before I dip the dipper in the next time, I wait for a moment so that the dirt deposits again on the bottom of the barrel. I use the last bit of water to clean out the barrel. With a hand brush I scrub of the inside wall at least as far as I can reach into the barrel. The opening of the barrel is only half as wide as the barrel itself and the barrel is about 1.50m high. Although I am 1.80 m tall, I hardly manage to reach the bottom of the barrel. After scrubbing, I lift the barrel up to the gully grate, move it in a light circle so that the water starts to move and the remaining dirt swirls up from the bottom. Then, I try to flip the barrel from top to bottom quickly so that the dirt washes out with the water.

While I am emptying the barrel, Melody comes up the road on her way home. We talk briefly before she leaves saying 'Molakaw ko kay naa koy daghang laba', I have to go now, I have a lot of washing to do. In the meantime, the sky has turned grey and heavy rain clouds come in from Cebu City. I hear the growl of thunder but it is still far away. I go inside the house and five minutes later I hear the rain coming and then it is pouring. I wait for a few minutes, looking outside to check if my neighbors have already gone outside to fetch the rain. Before I manage to go out, Ate Josy has already opened the lid of my barrel. I thank her calling 'Salamat' (thank you) through the open window. For the moment, there is nothing to do than to wait until the barrel is full so that I can transfer the water inside.

The rain becomes heavier and the water almost shoots out of Ate Josy's downspout. The water jet shoots over the container but not inside. As Ate Josy is not around, I take my umbrella and run outside to put the container under the water jet. Ate Lorna and Ate Carmela are busy transferring the water from container to container and inside the house. I go to Ate Lorna to offer her my help. She looks at me with big eyes replying 'ayaw na, ako na lang', meaning something like 'you don't do it', I'll do it myself.' Disappointed and feeling useless, I go back inside my house.

With these extracts from my weekly reports, I want to highlight the social role of water in the daily interaction with my neighbors and the exchange pattern that evolved from it. Our exchange pattern was mainly characterized by the habit that either I realized that I have too much water, or my neighbors – who had a close eye on my water reserves – informed me indirectly that they were in need of water, e.g. by informing me about the condition of my water stocks. In return for my *gift of water*, they opened the lid of my barrel during rain showers especially then when I was not at home, or they cleaned the barrel after emptying it. Through this exchange pattern (including the involved practices and objects), the social differences between my neighbors and me became tangible out of a situation which equally affected us, namely the absence of a water source. It was a challenging experience - I guess - not only for me, but also for my neighbors, because there were contradictory notions of "my person," that is, how my neighbors perceive me in contrast to how I perceive myself. While I do not consider myself as rich, my neighbors consider me to be a *wealthy Americana* because I am a white woman from overseas. Even though there is a factual social economic difference between my neighbors and me, I always made an effort not to expose it. I rather tried to do the contrary, namely to live as much as possible like my neighbors. Nevertheless, besides my physical appearance, a range of other factors betrayed my efforts, like e.g. living alone in the model house and having two rain barrels only for my own consumption. Thus, our water-exchange pattern became the most profound

social scene through which I learned about my research partners' social and cultural behavior. In our exchange pattern it was usually the case that I gave the resource (here water) against help (here e.g. opening and cleaning the barrel, etc.) from my neighbors. Sometimes, as outlined above, we would also exchange my dirty water against their clean water. But it never happened the other way around. The reason was not that I was not willing to offer my help – it was rather the contrary – but that my neighbors usually refused my help arguing “*ayaw na, kay bugat*” or “*ayaw na kay hugaw*” meaning ‘don’t, it is *too heavy/ too difficult* or *dirty*’ for me. From someone like *me*, they did not expect help but rather a share of my supposed *wealth*, in this case my water. From their perspective, offering help is what they consider the only thing they can give because of being poor.¹²³ Thus, water became a social agent in our relationship. It created a social scene which enabled my research partners to involve me in a culturally appropriate manner that did not only reflect our social differences but also their socially and culturally shaped expectations of rights and obligations between rich and poor.

Besides these social effects, there is another aesthetic aspect resulting from the specific conditions of the water supply on the one hand, and the improved material quality of the houses on the other hand: the way in which the residents perceive and value rain. As already indicated, the perception and evaluation of rain has changed since the residents moved to the housing project. While they used to experience heavy rain as threat to life, they now praise it as a gift of God. Based on the aesthetic concepts described in chapter 2, I argue that this is a result of the aesthetic experience of rain in the transition process.

The Aesthetic Experience of Rain – Voices from the Field

Malaya: Here it is nice because it is safe for children. It's not like at our place there. When it rained we avoided the holes and curled up to sleep. Here, it is not like this. We pray for rain because there is no water. Before, we did not pray for rain because of the many holes (Interview November 13, 2011, p. 21).

When I talked with my research partners about their former lives in the squatter areas and dumpsite settlements, they often raised similar issues like – as mentioned by Malaya – the link between the poor quality of their former dwelling and rain or storm. Their dwellings, made of light materials, only offered *shelter* against wind and rain but not full *protection* when rain and storm showed up in their extreme forms of appearance, which are common during typhoon season. During heavy rain showers, water comes into the house through holes in the walls and

¹²³ That this is the mentality behind my neighbor's behavior, I first understood after a conversation with two women from the housing project during a charity activity where we helped packing aid goods for flood victims in Mindanao. I asked them why they participate in this activity and they replied that they have nothing else to offer the victims except for their help.

the roof. Furthermore, tropical rain showers are intense and quickly cause the rising of water levels of rivers, creating life-threatening conditions in squatter areas in only a short time. My research partners usually used their bodies to show how high the water level rose, pointing up to their hips or stomach.

In the interviews, my research partners spoke about past and present experiences and their emotions related to rain:

Ate Lorna: In Maharlika it is dangerous [...] It is dangerous in the case of fire because the houses are built close beside to each other. When it rains, it floods and the water rises reaching up to the floor of the houses. [...] when it floods, the water rises up to the houses [the houses are built on stilts]. You cannot go out because the water reaches up to the waist. But at our place it only reaches up to the knee because we had a bridge there at the front. Scary, it is really scary and difficult there when it rains, in case of fire. We have been living in fear there [...] when it rains heavily, the small children jump off our bridge and swim in the river [...] It is very dirty, [...] but the children don't know it better (Interview November 15, 2011, p. 3).

Ate Clara: During typhoons our place gets flooded so deep and what scares us the most is if we get electrocuted. Someone from the barangay would inform us to evacuate in Immaculada while the others would go the National School. There are even others who do not hear the order to evacuate. When we transferred here I did not unload my clothes from the sacks. I would just hang them somewhere and from time to time I would wash them but I would just put them in the sack after washing. I really panic when I hear those sirens. That's why I never leave my kids alone. I would rather bring them along when I can't leave them at home with their father or another adult [...] (p.7). When I first arrived here, Maharlika was flooded because of heavy rain. I got up and carried things around and my daughter asked me 'what are you doing Ma?' suz, I thought I am still living in Maharlika. There, we would have to transfer our things to keep them dry when it floods. So when my child saw me doing the same thing she brought me back to my senses that we were not in Maharlika anymore. I thought of the people who lived in Maharlika and why they never grabbed the opportunity to live here. They could still adjust to this kind of life. When we meet they tell me that I've gone thin and darker in complexion and wonder if we were eating right here in Jasper. I just tell them that we are ok; we struggle to survive as usual but now at a safer and more secure place for our children. If we do not grab the opportunity we have to go back and rent a place. But we don't have a place to rent elsewhere so we just stay here, if we can no longer pay the rent here then we'll move out (laughing) (Interview November 29, 2011, p. 35).

Ate Hilda: Even though my head is aching because of the many tasks we have here, but what concerns my life here, that is nice, I enjoy my life here, I don't feel nervous about anything because my life here is so nice. [...] In times of rain, in Maharlika, if it rained for one hour I would not sleep. I would stay awake to watch the water level rising constantly checking if it reaches the floor of the house. [...] But here, even if it rains the whole night, I keep on sleeping.

Mel: What did you do with the computer¹²⁴ when it rained?

Ate Hilda: [...] we would place them in buckets, washing bowls and whatever else, we watched our computer when it heavily rained then we would look for things on which we could put them on top [...] its dangerous when a computer gets wet (Interview December 16, 2011, p. 13).

For Ate Lorna, rain was one factor why she experienced life in the squatter area as *dangerous* and *difficult*. Through flooding, the polluted water and the garbage from underneath is flushed into the houses. Ate Clara, who lived in the same squatter area as Ate Lorna, named further risk factors occurring in case of flooding, namely electrocution because of improper installation of electric wiring and electric household appliances. Her statement further revealed the existential

¹²⁴ In the squatter area, Ate Hilda operated an Internet café which she financed with a micro credit from the NGO.

fears triggered by heavy rain and flooding, causing her to take evacuation measures instinctively. That these experiences became embodied shows in her description of the first rain she experienced in her new home in the housing project. Referring to this first incident, she expresses her positive feelings about living in the housing project now but also the uncertainty because of the financial challenges involved in dwelling there. The major difference for Ate Hilda, who mentions similar experiences of rain, is that now rain does not keep her awake at night. My research partners' experiences connected to rain all have in common the feeling of stress and existential fears triggered by rain. Due to the environmental conditions of squatter areas and their positions in urban interspaces and along polluted river banks,¹²⁵ heavy rain showers quickly cause flooding further entailing potential risks like the destruction of household belongings or the entire house etc. My research partners were trapped in their houses when the settlement was flooded or they had to wade through waist- or stomach-deep water to reach their house. Thus, besides fire, rain is one of the natural forces creating life-threatening situations for informal settlers because the (poor) quality of their dwellings does not offer enough protection for such situations.

Therefore, I argue that my research partners' relation to rain transforms as an effect of the new living conditions of the housing projects for the following reasons:

- (1) Because of the improved material quality of the house and the new facilities including the rain gutter and the communal drainage system, and
- (2) because of the gap in the water supply system. Not only that their new houses made of concrete offer more protection compared with their former houses made of light materials, but also the communal drainage system prevents flooding.

Hence, while before a heavy rain shower triggered existential fears, it now causes a certain excitement. First, it is like a confirmation or reassurance of now living in a safe place. Second, it offers the possibility to acquire domestic water for free and thus save money with relatively little physical effort involved.

During my fieldwork, I relied on rainwater instead of buying water from the truck or fetching water from the deep well for also epistemological reasons, because it enabled me to experience what it means to rely on rainwater myself, as this is the case for most of the residents of the housing project. Furthermore, it enabled me to experience the specific aesthetics of rainwater.

¹²⁵ The pollution of rivers and the illegal construction of houses along the river banks is one of the major problems of Metro Cebu because in times of heavy rain showers, the water ways are blocked causing flooding not only in the squatter settlements but also of whole neighborhoods. Therefore, the city administration has passed the three-meter-easement-zone act, which prohibits the construction of dwellings within three meters from a river or sea-shore. Dwellings which are constructed within this area are prone to demolition.

Rainwater feels softer compared to the water from the tanker, which always had a certain oil-like film on the surface and feels much harder. The second reason was more practically motivated: As I did not have enough *small* containers to use for fetching water from the deep well, I accompanied my neighbors there only sometimes. I only had one (10l) bucket, two 50l and two 120l barrels, which were too heavy to transport when filled. By relying on rainwater myself, I also realized a change in how I experienced a rain shower during my stay in the Philippines. It made a difference compared with before and also afterwards. This I first became aware of when I spent a day in Cebu City and it suddenly started to rain. On the one hand, I right away thought of my rain barrels, wondering how much water was left, how the quality was and hoping for the support of my neighbors to open them. On the other hand, when it kept raining for a longer period, I became concerned about the people living in the dumpsite settlements and squatter areas, fearing that their settlements might be flooded.

These examples show that the way my research partners and I experience rain is influenced both by the conditions of our dwelling environments and by our lived experiences. The transition from one dwelling environment to another changes our perception and evaluation of rain. What used to be a nuisance or a threat to life became God's blessing. That is why I argue that in the transition process from squatter and dumpsite settlements to the housing project, rain triggers aesthetic experiences that lead to a transformation of the residents' (as well as my own) familiar perception and evaluation of rain, because in these moments they experience the differences between their past and present living conditions intensely.

Besides water, electricity was also a central topic for my research partners in the transition process, through which they experienced the changes in their way of life. In contrast to water supply, which affected all residents rather equally – me included –, the situation for electricity supply was differently shaped by the new living conditions of the housing project. Although my research partners point out that water is more important than electricity as it is essential for life, they also consider access to electricity important. This becomes evident in my research partners' statement that although there are various ways to access water without a connection, this is not possible for electricity. In the next chapter I will therefore examine the question of what role electricity plays in the lives of my research partners in general and in the transition process in particular.

5.3. ELECTRICITY: THE AESTHETICS OF POWER

Malaya: [Before] we used to sing because we had nothing else to do. And now, [in the housing project] we don't have electricity (Interview November 13, 2011, p. 41)

What is the connection between singing and electricity? In the Philippines, singing refers nowadays to the common practice of *videoke*. *Videoke* is a form of karaoke, which people practice at home or in so-called *videoke* bars with family members and friends. It is a pastime, but more importantly, it is a vital aspect of social traditions such as birthday celebrations, farewells, and holidays. On the collective level, *videoke* generates and maintains social cohesion. On the individual level, as explained by research partners, singing *videoke* seems to *nawagtang ang mga problema* (to take all the problems away). To sing (*videoke*) at home, people need a TV set with a sound system, a microphone, a DVD player and *videoke* DVDs; equipment that most of my research partners have at home. Therefore, Malaya's statement reveals that electricity and electric devices are incorporated in the practice of singing.

The prerequisite for singing in the housing project is power. This is power in its dual meaning: firstly as an allusion to the resource of electricity and secondly as an allusion to political and economic power. The communal policies require the residents to first prove their financial soundness, i.e. the capability to afford the monthly amortization of the house and the additional costs associated with electricity consumption (besides the monthly fees, this primarily entails the initial connection fee) before obtaining permission to apply for an electricity connection. As it has already become evident in the previous chapters, one of the greatest challenges for residents in the transition process is to be able to cope with the financial obligations and the additional costs of living in the housing project. While the NGO accepts delays in the monthly payment of the house if there are valid reasons, it strictly adheres to the rules for the approval of the electricity connection. As a result, residents who lack the financial resources are denied access to electricity. This chapter therefore deals once again with the question how the residents experience the transition from their former informal, marginalized and self-organized lifestyle in a squatter area or dumpsite settlement to the institutionalized and policy-based life in the socialized housing project. Since the topic is electricity consumption, the analysis also focuses on the questions of how the residents feel in their new living environment and how they value the change in their lifestyle. For a better understanding of why and in which form electricity matters to my research partners in the transition process, I will also take a look again at the living conditions in the squatter and dumpsite settlements.

During the writing of this chapter, electricity revealed itself as a subject which is entangled in various levels of everyday life. In contrast to the materials concrete and water, electricity is intangible in its natural form. It is only experienced in the material forms produced by electric

devices like light, sound, airflow, cold or respective warm air, etc. Due to the entanglement of electricity, it turned out to be more difficult to maintain the structure of the previous chapters ranging from ideas over practices to perceptions. Therefore, the previous structure cannot be strictly applied in this chapter. Rather, aesthetics and its social effects pervade all topics discussed in the following. Like in the previous chapters, I will launch the analysis with a short overview about general features of electricity and its prominence in anthropological research.

Electricity – A Blind Spot in Anthropology

In anthropology, there has still not a lot been written about electricity, and especially its central role in everyday life. Like water, electricity is taken for granted in western countries. In disaster situations like flooding, earthquakes or other incidents, in the news power failures are one of the first-mentioned consequences for affected households. This demonstrates that to live in a house without electricity and thus without electric appliances (such as lamps, stoves, mobile phones and computers) appears almost unimaginable. This, however, is not the case everywhere in the world. Especially in developing countries, the supply of households with electric power in urban poor settlements as well as in rural areas is still an ongoing process. Poor urban households in informal settlements usually lack not only access to safe water but also to electricity. Both are considered factors of poverty (cf. Berner 2000).

Despite its prominent role in present dwelling experiences in which electric appliances are involved, electricity is a blind spot in anthropology. Interestingly, Miller (1996) remarks the same for consumption. But while a rising number of anthropologists are paying increased attention to studying consumption, electricity as a central, if not to say the essential aspect of modern consumption practices – due to manufacturing techniques and the increased use of electric (household) appliances – remains widely overlooked. One reason for this may lay in the fact that especially in modern technology-based societies electricity is a resource taken for granted. There are only few moments in which electricity is consciously experienced, e.g. during power blackouts. So why should anthropologists study electricity? The anthropologist Harold Wilhite offers an answer to this question. In his article “Why energy needs anthropology” (2005) he points out that anthropology has the potential to make an important contribution in the study of energy, especially in studying its consumption. Based on his assumption that the consumption of energy and electricity has a great influence on the emotional well-being of the consumer, the study of electricity consumption also allows the investigation of concepts of a good life and well-being, including ideas about comfort, convenience, cleanliness and entertainment. Con-

sidering electricity consumption in the analysis of the transition process provides a useful approach to understanding how my research partners' lifestyle changes in housing practices are experienced and what they need to feel comfortable in their new environment. First of all, it seems necessary to clarify how the term electricity is used and understood in the context of this book.

What is Electricity?

When I speak of electricity, I refer to what is commonly understood as electric current. Wilhite (2005) describes two interesting features of electricity. Firstly, electricity is of little use in and of itself. It rather is the necessary condition for the possibility to use electric devices. This fact brings along the second feature of electricity concerning its aesthetics. Electricity is never perceived in its natural form but in the material forms produced by electric devices, like light, sound, cool or warm air. To ensure the use of electricity,

“it must pass through a socio-technological system in order to reach the site of its intended use. There it must be converted, using another technology, such as television or car, before it becomes transformed into something useful” (ibid: 1).

Electricity is produced, transferred, and then can be used. In this process, electricity is transformed into a social good with a multi-faceted biography. Winther (2008) studied the impact of the introduction of electricity on the organization of everyday life in rural Zanzibar. In her research, she agrees with Wilhite regarding the fact that it is not electricity in its natural form that mainly matters to the people. She found that electricity ceases to be the focus of concern as soon as electric cables and meters are installed, and the bills are paid. What then becomes concerning are – what Winther calls – *primary objects*, referring to electric appliances, and *secondary objects*, meaning the services they produce and offer.

“In everyday life, [...] people relate more closely to the services [...] primary objects produce with the help of electricity than to the appliances themselves. Apart from the instances when a device is obtained or becomes broken, people rather tend to think of lighting, cooling capacity and television programs (that is, entertainment, information, so on) when they use or talk about such devices” (Winther 2008: 8).

The consumption of electricity requires a large-scale (material and human) infrastructure connecting the power plant with the client's house providing the flow of the resource. Through power points in the house, electric devices are connected to the electricity grid and thus become part of the large-scale electricity infrastructure. Therefore, through infrastructure electricity is transformed into electric current, which represents the condition of possibility to make use of electric devices. At this point, I will introduce a definition of infrastructure deriving from sci-

ence and technology studies. The concept of infrastructure is essential understanding the characteristics of electricity in a broader sense. Worth mentioning here are Star and Ruhleder who put together nine features defining infrastructure (1996; see also Star 1999). In the context of electricity, I will present five of the nine features. The first is that “by definition [infrastructure is] invisible [and] part of the background for other kinds of work. It is ready-to-hand” (Star and Ruhleder, 1996: 113). This leads to the fact that infrastructure is commonly *taken for granted*. Thus, the significance of the generally invisible quality of working infrastructure only becomes tangible in the moment of *breakdown*. These features are also characteristic for electricity, as pointed out by Wilhite and Winther mentioned above. With regard to the housing project, *breakdown* is less a problem causing the absence of electricity than its restricted access. In the Philippines in general, *break down* is rather experienced as normal. Secondly, Star (1999) describes infrastructure either as one person’s *topic or difficulty*. This is also the case for the housing project where access to electricity is on the one hand subject of the capacity building program and on the other hand a challenge to master, especially for the *homepartners* who have little financial means. In this context, another feature of infrastructure appears, namely infrastructure is understood as a *fundamental relational* concept, meaning that things become real infrastructure in relation to organized practices. The last two features to be mentioned here are that infrastructure is *learned as part of membership* and *links with conventions of practice* (cf. *ibid.*: 1999: 382; see also Star and Ruhleder 1996: 113).

For the present study, the concepts from science and technology studies play a rather subordinate role for the analysis of electricity consumption practices. Even though they offer rich ideas, they would lead the present study into a different direction than intended. From a material cultural perspective, I am more interested in the questions of how my research partners *get connected*, what they *use* electricity for and how electricity *affects* the organization of their everyday life in past and present. The latter question further requires taking concepts from aesthetics into account as outlined in chapter 2.

5.3.1 EM-POWER-MENT – A MATTER OF TRANSITION

In November 2011, I got the chance to participate in an activity called *orientation*. It is a preparation seminar for *homepartner* applicants who were waiting to be relocated to a new socialized housing project for scavenger families from Mandaue City. It is the organization’s third socialized housing project. The orientation took place in the housing project where I conducted my fieldwork. The applicants were informed about the state of the construction process, the requirements of the equity work and the communal policies. While presenting the communal

policies, the social worker touched the topic of electricity. He asked the applicants who of them possessed a TV set. 26 out of thirty answered this question with *yes*, only four with *no*. Then he commented with a slight ironic tone: “*In the housing project, each of you will have your own electricity bill with your name on top. Not like now!*” – alluding to the unauthorized connections common for the dumpsite settlement. But how do the *homepartners* get connected to electricity in the housing project?

When I prepared my fieldwork, I never thought about electricity or that it could play a role in my research. On my first visits to the dumpsite settlements and squatter areas, I was quite astonished that households apparently had electricity. Electric sounds resonated from different places, sometimes loudly and sometimes softly. There were Internet cafés and *videoke* bars. I noticed these things but did not think about them further. I first became aware that electricity is an important factor to the residents of the housing project, when I prepared my stay in the field. Before I finally decided to move into the housing project, the project coordinator tried to make sure that I was aware of the living conditions in the model house. First of all, she informed me that there was no air conditioning in the house. This, however, did not bother me at all. Then she told me that the model house was actually not connected. I first would have to apply for an electricity connection at Mactan Electric Company (MECO) and pay the connection fees. To make sure that I have electricity on the day I move into the model house, the project coordinator instructed my research assistant and the chairperson to quickly process the documents. That means, the request for an electricity connection first had to be submitted to the executive director of the NGO located in downtown Cebu City. He had to sign the documents with which I could then apply for an electricity connection at MECO in Lapu-Lapu City. This procedure took almost a week and it turned out that the model house was not connected the day I moved in. As the project coordinator thought that I could not stay in the house without electricity, she offered me to stay in the vestry which is fitted with a bed and supplied with electric light and air conditioning for whenever a priest comes for a visit and wants to stay overnight. However, I did not feel comfortable about the idea and preferred to move into the model house right away, even without electricity. Even though it was fine for me, my research partners were troubled by the idea of me staying alone in the house without light. So they *tapped*¹²⁶ the model house to the house of the BOD-treasurer, who lived two rows away, for the night hours. Only weeks later did I find out that *tapping* is illegal - not only with regard to the power supply company, it is also a violation of the communal policies.

¹²⁶ *Mag-tapping* is the Cebuano term my research partners used for unauthorized connections.

Through the efforts of my research partners, from the first day on I was provided with electricity. The day I moved into the housing project, I then found out what my research partners considered to be important (electric) household appliances: a refrigerator with a little freezer and an electric pedestal fan. These were part of the things my research assistant and her sister-in-law pre-purchased for me at the department store, as well as things like washing pans, buckets, cutlery, pots and pans, a two-plate gas stove and a sofa bed. In these first interactions with my research partners, I experienced that electricity matters. However, I was not yet aware of the role electricity actually plays in their everyday lives. This I only learned day after day and through the interviews. While I was officially connected within a week, many households in the housing project live without electricity for months or even years. The reasons for this vary. They are linked to the policies and requirements for dwelling in the housing project.

Nanay Corazon: At the beginning, we had difficulties to adjust to our life because of no water and no electricity, water and electricity come together. So we are already here for three years and we still have no electricity. That is our sacrifice because you know water you can fetch there but you cannot fetch electricity you cannot carry it (Interview November 8, 2011, p. 33).

The statement of Nanay Corazon, whose experiences will play a central role in this chapter, reveals two central aspects.

- (1) The absence of water and electricity has negative effects on the process of adjustment, i.e. the phase within which the residents make themselves feel at home in their new dwelling environment.
- (2) It seems that electricity like water becomes exclusive, but in a different way.

As Nanay Corazon's statement implies and as I already described in the chapter before, the provision with water can be ensured through fetching free water from a well. This, however, is not possible for electricity. It cannot be simply fetched because it has to be authorized and economically acquired.

As the aim of this chapter is to highlight the significance of electricity to my research partners, I consider it necessary to first describe how they used to *get connected* and how they consumed electricity in their former dwelling environments. These experiences play a crucial role in how they evaluate the dwelling conditions of the housing project and what they expect of living in *a nice house in proper conditions*.

Basta mag Tapping - Electricity Connections in Squatter Areas and Dumpsite Settlements

On my first visit to a dumpsite settlement in Cebu in 2010, I was quite astonished about the infrastructure of the settlement. One of the first things I noticed were black wires running through the settlement at my head level used as clotheslines. I felt insecure and uncertain about the wires because I did not know if they were also used for electricity. From different points of the settlement loud music was roaring. When I got the chance while roaming through the settlement, I took a quick glance into the huts. Some families had a TV, a sound system or even a fridge. But I was most amazed when we passed by a hut hosting an Internet café. A range of teenage boys were playing computer games on three computer stations. Beside the Internet café, there were three *videoke* bars and a range of *sari-sari-stores*. My experiences in the dumpsite settlement contradicted my expectations, which came from the literature I had read beforehand. I did not expect this kind of infrastructure. Even though not all families in dumpsite settlements or squatter areas have access to electricity, a lot of households seemed to be connected. From my research partners I learned that most of them actually had an electricity connection in their former dwellings:

Ate Clara: Yes we had electricity, because we just connected to someone else. But you need someone having a meter (Interview November 29, 2011, p. 6).

Regina: We used telephone wire, the black one, and made a cloth line of it. That's what we used there (Interview November 28, 2011, p. 19).

Vito: Yes, illegal tapping because it costs 300 per month, you really need it because of the many mosquitoes [...] we were a lot, almost everyone of us tapped. [...] about 100 houses so everyone who lives there taps their places. [...] [the main connection is] there at the street beside ... [...] the wires we used are telephone wires [...] they are very long and you see them in the dumpsite settlement connected from one to the other. [we use telephone wire because] its expensive to buy proper electricity wire, and these are also safe because they explode, so you pull them out when they overload [...] [we] just get it from the dumpsite (Interview December 6, 2011, p 7).

Ate Belen: Yes [we had electricity], tapping, then you pay for it to the owner. [...] the ones who used to live there before, you know. But sometimes they also cut the connection if you did not pay, it is the same as with MECO if you do not pay the bill they cut the connection (Interview December 2, 2011, p. 6).

Nanay Corazon: Electricity is provided by VECO (electric company Cebu City). Electricity there is collective, I mean twelve parties connect to one meter and we shouldered the costs together because we were twelve parties we helped each other. E.g. 7000 divided by twelve that means it does not reach into thousands because we shouldered the costs together (Interview November 8, 2011, 34).

Tapping is a common type of unauthorized connection in squatter areas and dumpsite settlements. The precondition to get access to electricity is to find someone with a meter willing to share his/her connection. To connect one's dwelling with someone's meter, dumpsite settlers mainly used telephone wire due to its low cost and its qualities in case of an overload. In this informal electricity supply system the owner of the meter sets an estimated monthly fee for

each household according to the electric appliances in use. Nanay Corazon considered *tapping* as a social form of electricity connection. A group of households join together to split the costs for the initial connection fee, arguing that otherwise most urban poor households would not be able to finance an individual connection due to the high initial connection fees.

The important role of electricity in their former dwellings becomes apparent in my research partners' statements. As Vito points out, it helps to keep flies and mosquitoes away. But why is electricity needed for this task? As I learned during my fieldwork, people make use of electric fans as mosquito-repellent appliances, especially at night when they sleep. As already mentioned in the chapter before, mosquitoes are not only a nuisance but also a life threat because they spread dengue. Electricity is incorporated in the practice in the form of airflow. It protects people from mosquito bites while they are asleep and it is an air conditioner at the same time. From this point of view, access to electricity is considered important in the fact that it affects my research partners' sense of safety and security while sleeping positively. As well as for ventilation, electricity is used for electric lighting and the production of sounds. Electric sounds at high volumes were, however, usually named as factors for sleepless nights rather than advantages of electricity. The experience of relying on certain services provided by electricity has a major impact on what my research partners consider necessary or even basic conditions of housing. This is particularly true for the housing project, which is regarded as improving the quality of life. The provision with electricity is therefore a central issue in the process of adjusting to the new living conditions of the housing project. In the following I will now briefly outline the process that *homepartners* have to go through in order to be allowed to apply for an electricity connection.

Getting Connected

Regina: it seems as if we had no electricity for one year. Constantly we kept on processing the papers that time, constantly we went to [the NGO employees] to ask for the signature, it caused a lot of walking around because always something was missing regarding the house and the documents were withheld. And then something else was missing [...]. Therefore it took very long to get electricity (Interview November 28, 2011, p. 40).

In the housing project, electricity is a topic of the communal policies stipulated in the *Occupancy Rules and Deeds of Restrictions*. In paragraph 1 *Membership and Homepartners' Obligations*, it is regulated under point 2 that

[e]ach home partner shall individually apply to the electrical utility company for said facilities and shall pay the bills for his/her own electrical consumption. Electrical consumption for the common benefits and/or use shall be for the account of the homeowners' association funds for which shall be equally collected from among its members as indicated in Rule # 1 of this document.

These regulations reveal that electricity consumption takes place on an individual and a communal level. On the individual level, the households are responsible themselves for the generated expenses. On the communal level, electricity consumption expenses, which arise from the use of communal buildings (mainly for electric light, air conditioning produced by ceiling fans and the sound system used for voice transmission during meetings), are shared. While the communal buildings were supplied with electricity right away, each *homepartner* has to apply for an electricity connection individually. But before a *homepartner* can apply for an electricity connection, s/he has to apply for permission at the NGO. The NGO implemented an intermediate application process for major alterations at the house and the supply with water and electricity to monitor how the *homepartners* manage the new challenges involved in dwelling in the housing project, which mainly means whether they are able to meet their financial responsibilities. Therefore, each *homepartner* has to undergo a process of recommendation and approval to receive the documents necessary for the official electricity application, including the electrical plan of the house and the occupancy permit. In this process, the chairperson and the treasurer of the community first of all have to give their recommendation to the NGO employees of the organization. If they give their approval too, they sign the documents and forward them to the NGO's finance officer who will then check the applicant's balances. If there are no open balances of the monthly amortization payments, the application is again signed and finally forwarded to the executive director. He is the last to sign the documents and thus to give the final approval.

In the interviews, my research partners often only mentioned their experiences with these procedures in *side comments* or as a topic of *adjusting* to the new living conditions. There was, however, one research partner for whom it was a desire to talk about her experiences, especially with the NGO employees. Ate Lani described her feelings regarding this application process and the bases on which recommendations are given or denied as follows:

Ate Lani: [...] If you do not participate in a (communal) activity, you receive a warning ... you are tormented to give your share. If you do not regularly participate in the activities, it will take very long before you will receive the signature for electricity because that is how it works, if you do not participate in the activities. But how can you participate, Mel? If the activities here in the community take place while you are working, what if you lose your employment, how will you eat, how will you pay your house, how will you send your children to school if you stop your work only because of activities here in the community? (Interview December 20, 2011, p.12)

Ate Lani's comment indicates a link between electricity and membership performance. She argues that the reason why documents to apply for an electricity connection are denied or withheld are not only financial reasons, but that one's social performance and membership commitment also play a role. Active participation in communal activities is one of the requirements of the housing project (cf. chapter 4). Therefore, participation in activities is documented and

signed in a list. With the help of that list, the BODs together with the NGO employees regularly control members' active performance. Once (or twice a year) the level of participation of each member is made public in two charts presented on handwritten posters. One chart lists the *members in good standing (MIGS)* and the other the *members not in good standing (NIGS)*. Especially those members who are employed have difficulties to fulfill their membership obligations. This is accepted and acknowledged by the NGO employees and officials because the project aims to bring its members into employment. However, in case of a distribution of donated goods, like e.g. rice on Christmas, the share of the individual members are calculated according to the level of participation in communal activities. The smaller share for employed members is justified with their financial advantage because of earning money. In the percentage share, the engagement of members in communal affairs is objectified and made visible. As such, this system is used either as a means of reward or penalty. In the case of access to electricity, withholding the signature also becomes a means of penalizing inadequate membership performance. This is at least, how my research partners experience the application process. In the interview Ate Lani spoke about her godson's wife, which I will take as an example for this procedure.

Waiting for the Signature

At the time of my fieldwork, the family of Ate Lani's godson was still waiting for the approval of the NGO employees to apply for an electricity connection. According to Ate Lani, the reason why the social worker withheld her signature was due to how her godson's wife performed as a member in community activities. Ate Lani described a conflict between the wife and a social worker that came up because she did not attend leadership training. She explained that she did not attend the training because of pregnancy-related morning sickness. Apparently, the social worker did not consider this reason to be acceptable for being absent. Ate Lani therefore argued, "*how can she know that without yet being a mother?*".

Whether the exchange actually took place as presented is not of relevance for this chapter. It is very likely that the accused NGO employee would recount it in a different way. What is rather interesting is how the policies of the housing project – in this case regarding access to electricity – generate a social sphere of different power relations. From the NGO's perspective, the process of recommendation and approval is considered as a means of the HCD Program aiming to empower the *homepartners* to lead a decent life. As such, in the short term, it aims to ensure that the *homepartners* are able to meet their financial obligations and to prevent them from overstretching their financial abilities, i.e. that an approval for an electricity connection is denied

due to remaining balances. In the long term, this procedure aims to empower the *homepartners* to overcome a life in poverty. From the perspective of the *homepartners*, however, this procedure rather generates the feeling that they have no say in their own affairs but feel dependent on the good will of the community workers instead. Even though the NGO employees perceive themselves as mediators between the organization and the *homepartners*, they nevertheless stand in a certain power relation to the *homepartners*. In comparison with past experiences, they realize that in their former *lifeworld* they were able to get connected rather easily while now they have to prove good performance and financial capacities. In this situation, the *homepartners* feel helpless rather than empowered. This is at least the impression I gained from numerous conversations with my research partners. From this perspective, my research partners experience the application process for electricity, which can be taken exemplary for other affairs, as arbitrary and dependent on the good will of the NGO employees. This becomes further obvious by the following statement of Ate Lani who I asked about the residents' feelings towards the NGO employees. She answered:

Ate Lani: The people are afraid because some of them are still in need of electricity. They are afraid of giving an answer, did you realize that during the General Assembly, did you realize how the people behaved, they did not raise their voice, even though they wanted to ask a question but they did not ask because of fear because some of them still need the signature for electricity but how many months did they not pay their amortization and then for example if they raise their voice they will not receive the signature... [?] (Interview December 20, 2011, p. 15)

The example of *getting connected* to electricity further reveals the challenges involved in the transition process, namely to learn and accept to subordinate to the policies of the housing project. An experience which some of my research partners called their *sacrifice* on their way towards a new life.

Nanay Corazon: So we are already here for three years and still have no electricity. That is our sacrifice. [...] it is because we have no electricity [...] it will be my daughter who has to process because of my privation I can only pray for it (Interview November 8, 2011, p. 31).

It is actually through her story that I became aware of the importance of an electricity connection for the residents on the one hand, and the paternalistic effects of the communal policies on the other hand, giving rise to ambivalent feelings towards the performed change of lifestyle. Therefore, I will discuss her experiences in more detail towards the end of this chapter as an example for the social aesthetics of electricity. The last topic of *Em-power-ment* in the next section is the value of electricity in a broad sense, how it is dimensioned and what it takes to finally pay for it.

The Value of Electricity and its Billing Procedure

In the housing project, the costs for electricity are a central topic. Firstly, the initial connection fee presents a real financial challenge to most *homepartners*. Those who have processed their documents successfully either borrow money from relatives or from a local moneylender to pay the fee or they wait until they receive some extra money like a thirteenth month's salary of a family member, money from relatives working abroad or from other occasions or sources. One of my research partners explained, for example, that they invested their share of a sold family lot in the province to finally get an electricity connection. The research partners connected to electricity point out that they worked hard to procure the money for the electricity connection fee, arguing that they suffered from living without electricity and the consequential conditions in the house. They expressed their effort in Cebuano with the term *paningkamot* meaning 'working hard'.

By the time the burden of the initial connection fee is overcome, electricity consumption and its costs become the focus of concern for my research partners. In the housing project, the billing procedure for electricity consumption is different compared to the squatter areas – at least if the *homepartners* used to have an unauthorized connection. In the case of joint connections, it is the owner of the meter who estimates the monthly costs based on the electric devices in use. In the housing project, in contrast, each household receives their own electricity bill, listing the exact amount of consumption, taxes, etc. The electricity consumption utility offers an orientation informing their clients about the electricity consumption of certain devices.

Ate Jonell: Today, we have been oriented by MECO about how much an electric fan, a TV, a rice cooker consume. You won't believe how much 15 minutes cooking consumes, how much is charged by a rice cooker... if you use a rice cooker in the morning, at noon and in the evening, but when you only use it once a day it's fine. Electric fan and TV, they also consume a lot (Interview December 21, 2011, p. 49).

The orientation helps to raise awareness with the inhabitants of the housing project about how much the electric devices they possess consume and what they can do to reduce their electricity consumption in order to keep their electricity bill low. With electricity consumption becoming transparent, consciousness about how to deal responsibly with energy and money is developed. In the following, I will present a discussion that came up during an interview about electricity consumption between my research partner, my assistant and me to highlight this aspect.

Marissa: We try to use electricity economically because the last bill was about 143 pesos.

Mel: Is this low?

Marissa: It is really high.

Mel: but do you have a refrigerator?

Marissa: Only a DVD player and a sound system.

Lori: 143 that's nice?! Because at our place it's much higher even though we only use it for stereo and light.

Mel: but don't you have a refrigerator? Is it old?

Lori: Ah, oh, yes we do.

Mel: and old one?

Lori: No, we have it for about 2 years.

Mel: Really, because mine is only small.

Lori: So do you have a high bill?

Mel: 200...

Lori: You know ours is 900

Mel: Really?

L: Yes, I tell you it is really high, I mean we have a washing machine but we only use it once a week.

Marissa: The last time ours was also high because during the fiesta we gave a favor to our neighbors and connected them. We only connected them for the fiesta because I was afraid of MECO because unauthorized connection, so after 2 days I cut it off again.

Mel: but what is your feeling inside the house when it is dark?

Marissa: You cannot properly move around because you can't see your arrangement. Your house is really ugly without light. Therefore, I worked hard to get electricity, I took out a loan, I just made the final payment this December only 3 or 4 days ago. I told them to economically use electricity so that the payment will be low because they always listen to loud music, very loud sounds, then in the evening I switch the lights off. Only the ceiling fan on so the child will not be eaten by mosquitoes, well that's it (Interview November 11, 2011, pp. 25-26).

Besides the already discussed topics why electricity matters, the conversation is about what is considered a reasonable amount for an electricity bill and the reasons for high costs. At the same time, it also shows the difficulty to understand the reason for high costs. Furthermore, Marissa explains what she thinks causes high electricity consumption in her house and presents her strategies for an economic handling of electricity.

Another aspect that changes with electricity consumption in the housing project compared to the former dwelling environment arises regarding the billing procedure. As mentioned before, the amount and the payment for the electricity consumption are negotiated informally between the *joined-user* and the owner of the meter. Thus, the different aspects of electricity consumption were negotiated within the informal system. In the housing project, in contrast, the *homepartners* have to contact and deal with the utility company officially. The relationship between both parties is formalized and contractually regulated. The *homepartners* are provided with an electricity bill that is delivered to the community. The bills are given to one of the local vendors selling their goods in the center of the community. Their stand is the first point of contact for visitors. The bills are then distributed to the recipients indicated on the bill either by one of the vendors or their children. The bills are not enveloped and thus can be viewed by basically anyone. One day I noted in my weekly report:

In the morning Ate Berta passes by. She holds a stack of paper in her hands, the electricity bills. She browses through the bills, which are not enveloped, looking for my name. Then she passes me one of the bills saying how much it is. I'm not sure if I got her right, thus I take a quick glance on the bill: it says that one bill is not yet paid and the total amount is about 1000 pesos. I am shocked for a second. I take a look at the address finding out that it is not mine. I give it back to Ate Berta. She browses again through the bills. She gives me another bill, this time it is the right one amounting to 'only' 300 pesos. I feel much better (Weekly Report, Thursday 20, September 2011).

The electricity bills are paid in about two weeks' time after the billing. Most *homepartners* pay their electricity bill in cash because they do not have a bank account. Paying cash means the payment is made at the utility company in Lapu-Lapu City. Modern bank account systems make the private delivery of money unnecessary. However, only few *homepartners* have a bank account and if they do, they most often use it to only receive and withdraw their wages twice a month. Therefore, paying the electricity bill is time-consuming and causes costs for transportation. Payment of the electricity bill is most often done by women, especially if the husband works during the day. Neighbors accompany each other to the utility company or take turns going there to pay in their neighbor's name, especially when close neighbors are busy due to work. In their former habitats, they only had to go to the meter's owner, usually in the vicinity. Or, if they had a proper meter, the utility company was within reach of a single ride on public transportation, while it takes at least three rides from the housing project. Only a few inhabitants of the housing project own a private vehicle. Thus, most of them rely on public transportation, making one central topic of the interviews. In this context I learned again from Ate Lorna what it means to use public transportation to pay the electricity bill.

Ate Lorna: There is no traysikul here [in the community] [...] the only time I used one was to go to Hilton on our way to Bohol [...] Because most often I take a traysikat because there is no traysikul here [...] ah but no, the only one when I use one is to go to MECO [electricity utility company].

Mel: Why don't you ask Nigel? He has got a traysikul to go to MECO, it is so much closer to take a traysikul.

Ate Lorna: We did not know that he drives passengers [and] when you are the only one who goes to pay for electricity you have to pay for the whole traysikul. [...] when you use public transportation you only pay for your personal fare, but if you are the only person who is brought there and you only pay your fare, no, because Nigel would make a loss for the gasoline if you only pay a fare of 7 pesos.

Mel: But do you go on your own to MECO?

Ate Lorna: Sometimes Susan accompanies me (hehehe), she is my partner (Interview November 15, 2011, pp. 46-47).

In this statement Ate Lorna describes the kind of public transportation she prefers for traveling to the utility company. The most common form to leave the housing project by public transportation is by *traysikul* – a bicycle with sidecar. *Traysikuls* are used for transferring to the next *jeepney* stop, which is about 1 km away. *Traysikats* are available almost at all times during the

day outside the community. There is a *traysikat* stop in front of a *sari-sari store* located at the access road. The drivers wait for passengers either from the housing project, the paper manufacturing company or the MRF. In contrast, there are only three *traysikul* drivers living in the community. However, they only randomly transport passengers from the housing project. The availability of public transportation reveals the peripheral location of the housing project. As the squatter areas were located at the margin of the city centers, access to public transportation was no problem at all. This is also commonly mentioned in association with access to markets, stores, jobs and entertainment.

In the next part of this chapter I will now take a closer look at the different tastes of electricity. My primary concern here is to shed light on the different products, i.e. aesthetic qualities in which electricity plays a central role for my research partners in everyday life; central in terms of what they consider the basics for feeling comfortable.

5.3.2 THE TASTE OF ELECTRICITY

As already outlined further above, electricity is never perceived in its natural form but in the material forms produced by electric devices like light, sound, cool or warm air. These are aesthetic qualities of electricity which affect people's well-being through the atmospheres it creates. The same is true for when electricity or, more precisely, its aesthetic qualities are absent. This is at least the case if people have already enjoyed its tastes, as Ate Jonell pointed it out in the interview:

Ate Jonell: Now it is comfortable, it would be even more comfortable if I had light [...] because we already tasted light (Interview December 21, 2011, p. 61).

Having or not having an electricity connection makes a decisive difference in the new life of my research partners. Especially the absence of electricity and the atmospheres it produces have a strong emotional impact on my research partners insofar as it strongly shapes how they perceive their *new being* in the housing project. In the following I will outline the different tastes of electricity which matter most to my research partners and their effects on the residents' well-being.

The Comfort of Electric Light

The first thing my research partners relate to when talking about electricity is *sugà*. *Sugà*, the Cebuano term for light, is sometimes even used equally with the term *kuryinti* meaning 'electricity' or 'electric current'. Even though a range of other sources like candles, or kerosene lamps can produce light, electric light makes a difference and is therefore essential to the people

and their well-being inside the house. This is e.g. what Ate Lorna and Ate Janis pointed out in the interview:

Ate Lorna: It is hard [when it is dark] because when you walk you always have to pay attention not to bump into something. Therefore you need light because it is different when you have light, you know. It seems as if electric light is the center of brightness. That's it, it is different when it is electric you can see everything (Interview November 15, 2011, p. 37).

Ate Janis: It is important to have light because I am concerned about my children, they always climb the stairs racing each other, jeez I am really afraid because it is very dark, and then once I did not pay attention you know, jeez I thought my foot already touched the bottom but it was still far away, that's it I am a coward, constantly running up and down we forget about [the dark]... I am afraid, how can you live without light and your children constantly know it better and keep running around (Interview December 8, 2011, p. 41).

The absence of electric light has an impact on activities inside the house after sunset, i.e. after 6pm. As my research partners point out, they then avoid moving around to avoid injuries. The reason for this is simple. In contrast to candlelight, electric light produces a bright light. Most often placed under the ceiling, electric lamps produce light from top to bottom and can therefore light up a whole room. Furthermore, electric light creates a different atmosphere compared to candles. Candles produce light from bottom to top and are placed in the area of activity, like the dining table. The space of light created by a candle is less bright, clear and it moves. It creates a round space and therefore a different atmosphere. Candlelight in western contexts is often associated with romance and coziness especially during wintertime (cf. e.g. Bille and Sørensen 2007). My neighbors were amused about these associations of candlelight when I told them about it once at dinner in their house. They were waiting for their application documents to be able to apply for the electric connection and could not share my feelings at all. During dinner, we placed four candles in the area of the table to provide a light bright enough to see what we had on our plates.

Only after my neighbors had been connected I became aware of the different effects of candlelight versus electric light. With the electric light, one could realize the actual height of the room. Previously, the room appeared to be much lower in height. I gained the impression that I was sitting more upright than by candlelight. The candlelight produced an atmosphere as if we were sitting in a cave in a covered position in otherwise dark surroundings. Darkness creates uncertainty about things that are or could be in the dark. This can be either furniture – as pointed out above – or evil spirits. Now and then, ghosts and monsters are small talk subjects, but ideas about them are rarely elaborated. However, in the context of living without electricity and thus without electric light, ghosts and monsters were a topic:

Marissa: [we have electricity but just recently. [Now] Its ok! [But before it was] dark, you cannot properly move around, but if there is electricity there is light so you can move around, because you are afraid in the dark. [...] for me, I am not afraid but my husband and our child are afraid and stories about mga úngù-úngù (monsters) make it even worse [...] (Interview November 11, 2011, p. 25).

Ate Clara: When we were still new here they said that there is a kikik here. It's a monster that projects itself as a bird but I did not care about whatever monster was out there because I had to store water for household use (Interview November 29, 2011, p. 36).

The fear of monsters in the dark was widespread among my research partners. Those who had to do without electric light thus preferred to stay inside the house at night, except when it rained, as Ate Clara's statement illustrates. The need for water drives the people outside despite the darkness and their fear of encountering a *kikik* (monster). The *kikik* was also a topic in the interview with Kuya Kent. He explained that there were *kikiks* in the squatter area where they dwelled before they transferred to the housing project. There they had no electricity and thus no light. This he mentioned as the reason for the existence of *kikiks*. Kuya Kent described the *kikik* as a ghost in the form of a bird:

Kuya Kent: [The kikik] is a large bird with a human body and bird head. It's big ... a monster, it conjures/practices witchcraft and when you walk through darkness you get bewitched. [...] but here, there are no kikiks because here is light (Interview November 15, 2011, p. 30).

What becomes apparent through the statements above is that electricity has a strong impact on people's sense of safety and well-being. This is evident in restricted movement in the house after sunset and in the belief in ghosts.¹²⁷

That electricity is a matter of safety I also became aware of by the behavior of my next-door neighbor's children. When their mother was not yet at home from work, they were afraid of being in the house alone after sunset as they were not yet connected to electricity. Their father and elder siblings still lived in their former dwelling in the squatter area because there they still had electricity. Alice believed the house was haunted in the dark. Therefore, she and her younger brother usually spend the evening hours either at my place, at Ate Lorna's house or playing in the community with other children at public places, like the basketball court, which were illuminated. This stopped when they were connected on December 23. From that day on, my neighbor's children no longer strolled around in the evening hours. Instead, I saw light inside and could hear either loud music or the sounds of a TV program coming from their electrified house.

There is a further aspect revealing that electricity creates a sense of safety. Households without electric light have to rely on other light sources like emergency lights,¹²⁸ candles or kerosene

¹²⁷ Winther (2008) found out that people in Zanzibar think of light as keeping out/away spirits or any kind of evil. Thus, electric light protects people against spirits (cf. *ibid.*: 138).

¹²⁸ Emergency lights need to be recharged after each use. Therefore, my research partners either asked a neighbor with an electricity connection or did it in the cooperative store for a small fee. My research assistants also often charged their cell phones at my place.

lights. Using candles or kerosene lamps as light sources, however, bears the risk of fire. A risk the residents hoped to have left behind in the squatter areas.

As already mentioned, I experienced that my research partners' notions about candlelight strongly differed from my own. A fact surely related to our different living conditions and experiences. While in western notions, candlelight is an active agent in creating a romantic and cozy atmosphere (cf. Bille and Sørensen 2007), my research partners mainly associate it with poor living conditions and the potential risk of fire. From this point of view, the aesthetics of candlelight play a social role in the context of the housing project as it materializes and thus reveals the poor socio-economic status of residents. As such it should have become apparent that electric light makes a (crucial) difference for my research partners regarding their dwelling experiences. For them, it is a life-improving commodity, as Kuya Kent points out:

Kuya Kent: For a long time [we have electricity] already because we had some spare money but one year we lived without electricity. [...] well, we used gas. You had to extinguish the lamp before going to bed [...] I am sad because our place is dark, what can you do when there is no light, that's a problem, therefore we worked hard to have electricity (Interview November 15, 2011, p. 21).

Like Kuya Kent, most residents in the housing project work hard to afford an electricity connection because it does not only have a positive effect on their sense of safety and well-being but also on the way they organize daily routines and activities inside the house after sunset. In her ethnographic fieldwork in Zanzibar, Winther found out that “electricity has had a fundamental impact on the distinction between day and night” (2008: 144). It provides people with a new kind of liberty that expands their scope of action. By the use of electric light people are able to decide what to do at different hours of the day. This also became a topic in my interviews. In the following, I will present some statements to illustrate how electricity or the absence of electricity makes a difference to my research partners in (re-)structuring their day:

Ate Hilda: [...] even though we have no second floor, at least we have electricity that is the most important for me. Because it is very difficult to do anything or to eat in the evenings without light. Especially when you have no money to buy gas, you don't have money to buy candles, it is dark when you go to bed, there are many mosquitoes. Thus it's nice when you have light because even if you have dinner at 10 pm you still have light, [without electricity] ay, it seems as if the darkness makes me sad, but regarding the place, I am very happy that I have a stable/concrete house [...] (Interview December 16, 2011, p. 13).

Ate Belen: When you have electricity you can move around till whatever time and if you have no electricity you cook early so that you do not have to cook when it is dark, because if you have no electricity it is dark and you cannot move around. You cannot see your work. Having electricity makes a difference. And if you have electricity and you did not do the washing and cleaning in the morning or during the day, no problem you can do it at night because there is light (Interview December 2, 2011, p. 35).

Ate Leticia: [Since I have electricity] it is the same [whether it is day or night] because I move around during the day and then I work in the evening. [...] that's it, now we have electricity so I

work during the day and also in the evening. In the past, I also sew in the evening but not until late because I could only use an emergency light, [...] at that time I went to bed very early around 8 latest at 9 pm [...] yes, because I listened to a drama on the radio, I bought a small radio and we used batteries. Now I go to bed around 12 pm. It's getting late every evening because I make ice candy, just me, I hurry up to make it when I am done, I also make ice water and then when I am done, it is already 12, then I lay down. When the day starts and I finished breakfast, I have nothing to do, I just feel drowsy. [...] Before, after I finished dinner, ay... I liked to take a seat outside because I had nothing else to do because it was dark, but now we have light so I just do whatever I want to do (Interview November 10, 2011, pp. 39-40).

The statements show the impact electricity has, especially in the form of light, on performing and structuring daily routines, on the pace of life in general and on the forms, in which electricity or its absence materializes. Families without electricity try to finish daily routines like washing, bathing, cleaning, cooking and eating before sunset. When it is dark, my research partners reported, they have nothing else to do than go to bed. Students are also affected. School finishes at 4 pm. The time after school is first of all used for playing and eating. Homework is done afterwards in the evening hours. Having no electric light makes this task difficult for the children. My host family's youngest daughter studied during the night to prepare her classes for the other day. She complained about aching eyes due to the bad quality of candlelight for reading. Instead of working in the light of a candle, another research partner explained that the children in her street gather around the post of the street lighting¹²⁹ to do their homework. In contrast, families who have electricity and thus electric light can continue with a range of activities. Electricity in the form of light enables them to perform indoor activities at whatever time of the day independent of daylight. This especially offers an advantage for women who work during the day and are commonly in charge of household chores, which they then do in the evening hours. As already mentioned, electric light also makes collecting rainwater at night easier and more comfortable. Here it becomes evident that access to electricity and water are both aspects that make the specific living conditions in the housing project perceptible.

I have already pointed out the positive effects of electric light on the individual level, i.e. an improvement of the residents' sense of safety and well-being as well as the organization of daily routines. On the collective level, electric light or darkness becomes socially effective through its aesthetics. Light or darkness separates the residents into those who have and those who do not have electricity. In the following extract, Ate Jonell, a so-called *have-not*, speaks about her experiences of dwelling without electricity and about her relationship to neighboring so-called *haves*.

¹²⁹ For some reasons, the households of the east wing of the housing site could not be provided with individual electricity connections until September 2011. Therefore, the NGO provided street lighting in the main road.

Ate Jonell: [Life without electricity] is ok, I cannot make light but the light of Ate Leona glows at the backside of her house, it's quite bright and we go to bed early. Very early I prepare everything so that when we eat it is still bright. When it gets dark, we go upstairs and lay down because it is very dark. Then when Ate Leonas witches off the light outside we go upstairs. Our life is really pitiful, I keep on questioning myself when will we get light, no? I feel so sorry for my children because they say 'Ma, I go and watch TV.' And I answer, don't always go to the neighbors, Dong (nickname for son/younger man), it's shameful for us. Don't make us feel ashamed about how we live...ah, I call him, because I feel ashamed because they watch TV at the neighbors, it makes me feel ashamed. I tell them to go home. My idea is that when they finished supper to go upstairs. That's how it is, we have to live with the darkness because we have no alternative because we don't have money. [...] I was not afraid [when we had no electricity] because there is also the outside light from Melody's house and she would let it burn till the morning hours and it also glows through the jalousie. Then there is also light from Bella that also glows till the morning. Thus it is also bright upstairs in our house. Yes, we sleep upstairs. We don't sleep downstairs because there are many mosquitoes thus we go upstairs because there is none. We are ok without light. The only time it was not ok was when I gave birth to my youngest child. But it's ok because we cannot do anything about it (Interview December 21, 2011, pp. 21-22).

Ate Jonell's statement reveals that not having electricity is in the first sense not a matter of how my research partners organize and structure daily routines but rather a matter of social differences emerging and becoming tangible by the aesthetics of light and darkness. Ate Jonell mentions the feeling of shame connected to the absence of an electricity connection and thus belonging to the *have-nots*. Due to the policies on the one hand and the importance of electricity on the other, having no electricity connection turns into a stigma showing that the *homepartners* are not able to meet their financial obligations or that they lack the money to pay for the initial connection fee. The feeling of shame is further triggered when neighbors might realize that they benefit from their electricity connection, possibly felt in cases when her children go to the neighbor's place to watch TV. They further benefit from the electric light of neighbors' dwellings in front of and behind their unit, but less obviously because it results from their locations. However, benefitting from neighbors' lights means to only be a dependent and passive consumer unable to decide for themselves when and how to consume electric light.

Towards the end of the extract, a second aspect becomes apparent in Ate Jonell' statement, namely people's ability to adapt to the conditions of their living environment. The difficulty to manage everyday life without electricity, especially in the form of light, however, arises out of past experiences, i.e. when electricity was already incorporated with certain practices and thus *taken for granted*. Contrastingly then, the absence and the difficulties to access electricity negatively affect my research partner's sense of satisfaction and well-being in comparison to their former dwelling environments.

Mel: Do you remember when I came to your house once? You were packing garlic. At that time you said that your house is ugly. Why did you say that?

Ate Jonell: Our house was ugly because we had no light. If it is bright your residence is shining. And then, if you have no light your residence is dark and your thoughts are miserable because your house is dark. You envy the others who constantly watch TV, play/listen to music and we are unhappy/miserable because it's dreary (mingaw) (Interview December 21, 2011, pp. 62).

In her statement Ate Jonell points out the impact electric light has on her feeling of comfort in the house. Even though she describes that the quality of living conditions in the housing project are improved compared to living conditions in the squatter area, especially regarding its olfactory qualities. The experience of darkness affects her emotional well-being and her way of thinking. She explains her feelings by the fact that they have already experienced the *taste of light*. Thus, even though she describes the living conditions as improved from a rational point of view, her feeling of comfort is diminished due to her experiences of having lived with electricity first and now having to live without it.

So far, this chapter has mainly dealt with notions of comfort in which electricity or rather its various products are incorporated. This becomes especially obvious in connection with special occasions. Not only during childbirth, as expressed by Ate Jonell, but most of all to celebrate holidays in a proper way.

Light up, Turn the Music on and Celebrate

On occasions like Christmas, weddings, funerals and especially the annual *fiesta*, electric light, electric music and *videoke* matter as social agents creating a festive atmosphere and contributing to generating and maintaining social cohesion. In connection with funerals, electric light is important for the seven-day-wake for the dead body, which in poor households is performed at home. For the time of the wake, neighbors and relatives stay awake during the night playing cards or mahjong. Here, electric light is further important to prevent the soul of the deceased from escaping and to keep evil spirits away. Therefore, these celebrations are considered valid reasons for temporary unauthorized connections.

Nanay Corazon, in contrast, referring to the policies, argued that her attitude had changed towards unauthorized connections:

Nanay Corazon: In the past I agreed that it is very important to have light at special occasions like Christmas, New Year and All Saints Day but because the people here are stubborn they violate the policies to make/have light, but the policies are policies and I will not violate the policies just because... As far as I am concerned, even though it is Christmas and New Year we cannot do it (Interview November 8, 2011, p. 31.)

Especially during Christmas season,¹³⁰ which starts in September already, it becomes obvious that electricity is incorporated in celebration activities materializing in colorful and flashing fairy lights and sounds resounding at high volume through the streets. Shopping malls and

¹³⁰ Christmas and especially the month of December are highly valued by Filipinos and especially by urban poor families. This is the time when employees receive an extra pay check or food parcels. Squatter areas and dumpsites become destinations for NGOs and private donors offering food and clothing to urban poor families and toys for the children.

streets are decorated with traditional lanterns and colorfully illuminated Christmas trees. Christmas cribs are installed in churches, chapels and on street corners. Loud Christmas music is played everywhere dominating the soundscape in the streets. At this time of the year the difference between *haves* and *have-nots* is particularly apparent through the aesthetics of different physical forms of electricity. While the houses of *haves* attract one's attention through colorful lights and sounds, the houses of *have-nots* vanish in darkness. Especially during Christmas season the social aesthetic features of electricity in the form of light and sound intensify the feeling of difference, as mentioned by Nanay Corazon's daughter:

Nanay Corazon: Ma, oh Ma look how bright their Christmas lights are ...oh, we are different oh, at our neighbors places its bright (Interview November 8, 2011, p. 31.)

In the interviews, my research partners usually argued that they find coping with their everyday life without electricity in the housing project difficult but bearable and *get used to it*. However, celebrating special occasions like the ones mentioned above without electricity and the services it offers is rather unthinkable. This also has much to do with the concept of *lingaw* and *mingaw* already described in chapter 4.3. The absence of electricity is experienced as *mingaw* here in the sense of boredom because of the absence of music and other forms of entertainment produced by electric devices like a TV. This was especially stressed by youths, usually expressed with the term *walay lingaw*, there is no entertainment or anything to do. What becomes evident here is that those research partners who still wait for an electricity connection experience the absence of electricity through the aesthetics of darkness, silence and stuffy air and the presence of flies and mosquitoes. When comparing past and present living conditions, my research partners experience the absence of electricity as a retrograde step. It generates discrepancy experiences insofar as the absence of electricity and what it entails contradicts with my research partners' ideas and aspirations about their new decent life.

That electricity matters in the form of light should have become clear. However, besides light, electricity also matters in a range of other forms like sounds and entertainment. In these forms, my research partners experience electricity as life-improving insofar as it offers alleviation on the emotional level. Watching TV, listening music, or singing *videoke* put my research partners in a mood to relax and to forget about everyday problems for a moment. It is also in these forms that electricity is incorporated in festive activities. Besides entertainment, electricity also matters in the production of *cool air*.

Cool Down

Cool air is something my research partners usually only benefit from in air-conditioned environments or when it is produced by refrigerators. While the former offers a pleasant cooling of the body, the latter rather generates a cooling of food and drinks and hence a cooling of the body in an enhanced and figurative sense. For my research partners, access to cool air became a matter of the transition process, as I will briefly outline in the following.

To benefit from cool air, my research partners usually explained, they would go to a shopping mall. Those research partners who lived in squatter areas¹³¹ occasionally went to shopping malls because they were within walking distance. Even though they had no money to actually do shopping, they enjoyed strolling around in a cool environment.

Nanay Corazon: We would just walk to SM, we would go there do window-shopping and also to cool down. Even if we had nothing to buy, it was just close-by, we had no fare to pay, and especially if an artist was announced, we would go there straight away [...] [now] only seldom [...] we go to Grand Mall, it's here in Lapu-Lapu, because of the fare ... only when we need something [...] (Interview November 8, 2011, p. 28).

Nanay Corazon points out that since they have transferred to the housing project, visits to shopping malls are less frequent because they are far away and thus those visits would cause (extra) expenses for transportation. Ate Jonell expresses a further reason, namely that they now have no more *spare money* because of the higher expenses involved in dwelling in the housing project.

Ate Jonell: Before, when we lived in Aroma, we used to go for a stroll in the shopping mall because we did not have to pay for the house, we only have a small income. In Aroma we did not have to buy the house, you only had to buy water and then electricity [...] there you had lots of spare money from your income, we would go to Jollibee, the kids would joyride and afterwards play in the playgrounds...well, the children were happy. Now, my children keep asking when we go for a stroll again but I tell them that look we are unlucky/miserable. Just leave it alone because now we have to work hard, I tell my children to get used to how it is now because before they were used to strolling around, because now we rent, now we buy the house and our income is just small (Interview November 21, 2011, p. 65).

Ate Jonell's statement again reveals the increased expenses caused by transferring from the squatter area to the housing project. Not only because of the costs involved in amortization's down-payments for the house but also because of the expenses arising from the distant and peripheral location of the housing project, which makes access to *cool air* or to *cool environments* more difficult and more exceptional for the residents. This is, as outlined above, especially the case for those who used to dwell in close distance to shopping malls.

¹³¹ My research partners from the dumpsite settlements explained that they went to the market to do the shopping rather than going to a Mall. One of the reasons for this might be that the next shopping mall was not reachable in walking distance and also the way they perceived themselves outside the dumpsite settlement, as described by Ate Janis in chapter 3.5, as being dirty.

A life without a refrigerator may be inconceivable for many people in the world today, but for others it is everyday life. For most of my research partners a refrigerator does not belong to the basic electric household appliances. Owning one is rather considered luxury because it consumes a lot of power. Nevertheless, soft drinks or juice are preferably consumed cold. Therefore, my research partners usually bought cold soft drinks from the cooperative store for immediate consumption. For making juice, they use instant powder and iced water for cooling. Iced water is bought from neighbors who have a refrigerator with a freezer. This leads me to the advantages of a refrigerator and why it makes a difference in the lives of my research partners, which I will highlight by a statement of Ate Jonell.

Ate Jonell: Yes, [we have a refrigerator] for a long time already, since 2001. I used it for my store in the past [...] but we don't have a freezer [...] for making ice. I don't have it anymore because I sold it, I went to the junkshop and asked if they buy it. For the money I bought a small one so that I can put the viand inside.

M: What do you do with your groceries if you have no refrigerator?

Ate Jonell: We constantly buy viand at the market. It's very tiring if you have no refrigerator because you always have to go to Skina (the market at the crossroad), the transportation fee is very expensive. Therefore my idea is to mainly buy sardines, noodles, and buwad (dried fish), ginamus (fermented fish) those things that don't go bad. [...] Therefore, it is good when you have a refrigerator so that you can stock viand (Interview December 21, 2011, p. 50).

This statement reveals two main advantages of a refrigerator, which are connected to the peripheral location of the housing project and the limited range of goods offered by the cooperative store. First, fresh nutrition like vegetables and especially fish and meat are not offered in the housing project. They have to be acquired from one of the so-called wet markets located in about 1km to 4km distance. Ate Jonell describes buying at the market as *tiring* and *expensive*, because it involves traveling with public transportation, causing extra expenses. This perspective results from her experiences from the squatter area. There, access to either fresh or cooked food was easily available, as it was offered in short walking distance. Thus, a refrigerator was not necessary because food could be bought portioned and consumed right away, that being one of the advantages of their former niche existence. In the housing project, in contrast, a refrigerator offers the advantage of storing fresh food and thus making daily shopping trips to the local market unnecessary. However, if a refrigerator is not available another strategy to avoid going to the market daily is by consuming canned goods or by making meat and fish durable by preserving it in vinegar. From this perspective, electricity in the form of cold has an impact on food practices.

In her statement, Ate Jonell mentions a second advantage of a refrigerator, at least if it has a freezer: It offers the possibility to produce ice water which is then sold to neighbors. In the housing project, selling ice water and iced candy presents a common form of a small-scale

business and as such a simple means of earning some extra money. Households selling ice water usually put a sign on their entrance door, offering it for one peso. Some households also offer homemade iced candy which, however, involves more effort in production.

While access to cool air is rather exceptional for (urban) poor, cool drinks already offer a pleasant way of cooling down in tropical living conditions. In the case of my research partners, a refrigerator offers advantages in various ways through cooling, compensating some of the disadvantages which my research partners experience in their new dwelling environment.

This section dealt with electricity or rather the different forms electric devices produce making electricity a life-improving commodity. As shown above, electricity matters first of all on the level of individual households as electricity consumption in the form of light, air flow, sounds and entertainment makes dwelling easier and more comfortable. The policies involved in accessing electricity, however, generate effects on the collective level, namely that social differences between neighbors in the housing project are tangible in the aesthetics of electricity consumption. I now highlight this social effect of the aesthetics of electricity once more by the story of Nanay Corazon. It is actually her story that made me aware of the fact that electricity plays a crucial role in the transition process and becomes an indicator of whether residents are able to cope with the new financial challenges in the housing project or not. The latter means that they are denied the comfort of dwelling with electricity, which the residents often consider as a step backwards in their otherwise improved dwelling environment. Especially when the residents had electricity in their former houses, because then what I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter comes into play: Once you have tasted electricity, you don't want to be without it anymore.

The Social Aesthetics of Electricity

In October 2008, Nanay Corazon and her family transferred to the housing project. Since then, they have been unable to successfully apply for an electricity connection because of remaining balances for their house. For Nanay Corazon, who turned 50 years few days after the interview, it was the first time after about 32 years that she had to manage without electricity. The interview with Nanay Corazon took place few weeks before Christmas and electricity became a central topic. In the following, I will present those parts in which electricity was the main topic.

Mel: How do you feel inside the house without electricity?

Nanay Corazon: Well, it feels boring, sad, it seems as if you have only little patience... it is as if you would say what a nice house but then, when you go inside Mel, there is no light, its dark. There is only a small thing: Why can you not just get an extension, because there are policies here and you cannot make an extension. For a while I connected to my neighbors but then [the NGO employees] came and said 'no extension' and referred to the policies. So, what shall we do, we just follow the

policies but in the heart of our thoughts we are sad, especially for my children. They said, Ma, oh Ma it is boring here, no brightness. They have Christmas lights...we are different, at our neighbors' places it's bright. We were happy in our hearts when we had the extension from our neighbor's place, it was bright, we really only used it for light at our place. It's sad, it's sad to think about when we went home from the meeting where they said 'no extension', we went home to cut off the extension because it's the policy, but it's just so very sad... my feeling at the moment is we cannot get electricity because we cannot quickly process the documents for electricity because it costs about 7000 pesos for the connection plus you do not get the signature if you have delays in your amortization payments. You do not get the signature on your papers/documents when you have open balances. For example for the livelihood, you have to go to the Accounting of [the NGO], then when they see that you have delays in the payment for your house, they ask why did you not pay, then you have payables for the livelihood, [...] plus when you apply for the electricity connection it costs about 7000 pesos, where are we Mel? (How can/shall we be able to do this?) then plus the house, we have delayed payments so it is a very long process, it goes into thousands here, and also the balance for the house goes into thousands, and thousands for processing electricity, that's why we don't have electricity, so I just don't have it Mel, therefore we will celebrate very sad Christmas we will just let our tears flow/drip [Nanay Corazon cries], regarding light, if only I would be concerned, it would be no problem, but I feel pity for my children, they expect from me because we are their parents to have more comfort. I constantly tell my daughter, 'Day', as soon as we can afford it, it is not yet December, then we have light because what is important is light as long as we have water, we can use candles' [Nanay Corazon still crying] and then my daughters are constantly asking 'Ma are we going to celebrate Christmas without light?' Then I answer, 'well, we try as hard as we can, it is not yet December', because what shall I do [Nanay Corazon speaks in low voice still crying]. In the past I agreed that it is very important to have light for special occasions like Christmas, New Year and All Saints Day, but because the people here are stubborn they violate the policies to have light, but the policies are policies and I will not violate the policies just because... As far as I am concerned, even though it is Christmas and New Year we cannot do it... so my children keep on asking 'Ma, when do we get light?' 'We just keep on working hard Day, so that we have light when it is December, but it seems it is not yet sure because we are busy to pay our debt, we have a lot of delayed amortization payments for the house and then to process electricity is 7000 (Interview November 8, 2011, pp. 31-32).

In the statement Nanay Corazon first describes the atmosphere inside the house when electronic products are absent. Then she mentions the policies as main the reason for the absence of those products. However, it is not the policies per se which prevent her from accessing electricity but rather that NGO employees strictly enforce them. That the policies turn into a problem for her is further linked to her family's financial situation as they have remaining balances on the house. From Nanay Corazon's perspective, the communal policies together with the living conditions in the housing project are further reasons for increased expenses and a smaller operational scope for the *homepartners* compared to their former living environments where they could easily get access to electricity through *shared connections*. What is also reflected in the statement is that it is not so much about electricity as it is about the associated products such as light and brightness, which offer entertainment and a positive feeling of comfort. The absence of electricity, however, not only deprives her of pleasures triggered by electricity consumption but also of feeling equivalent to neighbors who have electricity. Here, the aesthetics of electronic products become socially effective. They create social differences and divide between *haves* and *have-nots*.

However, complying with the policies seems to be a challenge Nanay Corazon accepts in exchange for the advantages offered by living in a decent house in a decent environment. From

this situation, the policies prove to have an effect on Nanay Corazon's behavior, who gave up the unauthorized connection when the NGO employees found out about it. Following the policies and not being able to meet their requirements has a crucial impact on the well-being and feeling of comfort, as pointed out by Nanay Corazon. A house without electricity has different aesthetics compared to a house with electricity. The central agent here is light. However, what becomes apparent in her statement, for Nanay Corazon the emotional impact of electricity in the context of the housing project is enormous. During this section of the interview, Nanay Corazon was overwhelmed by her emotions and started to cry. Her feelings towards living without electricity culminated in the description of the financial burden she has experienced since living in the housing project.

Moreover, it has to be pointed out that in Nanay Corazon's case her income-generating activities improved after they transferred to the housing project. Before that she only earned some money as a street vendor. Now, she is employed as an operator in the Material Recycling Facility working seven days a week. Her husband works as a taxi-driver in 48-hour shifts. Even though they now have two incomes they struggle financially because of the increased daily expenses compared with those before in the squatter area. This is partly due to the economic conditions of the housing project, partly due to its remote location and state of development. Consumer goods are more expensive in the cooperative store than in *sari-sari-stores* because of the surplus for the patrimonial refund. Going shopping at one of the local markets is cheaper but means extra expenses for transportation. Domestic water can be obtained for free but only under certain conditions, as described in the chapter before. In the case of Nanay Corazon, the financing of her daughters' education creates additional financial expenses further increasing financial obligations. Educational costs mainly occur for transportation fares, daily allowances, fees for examinations etc., even though they are funded by scholarship programs. Consequently, daily expenses increase in the housing project. These, however, do not yet include the monthly mortgage for the house. In an informal conversation, a colleague of Nanay Corazon explained to me that since they have moved to the housing project, she has less money at her disposal than before although she is now paid above the minimum wage in the MRF (provided that the payment is made on time and without deductions). From her point of view, this is because she used to have a daily income as a street vendor while she now is paid twice a month only.

Through this conversation I again learned about the mentality arising from living out of the pocket. Urban poor who make a living through small-scale businesses like street vending calculate their expenditures and incomes for the day. To be employed (in the Philippines), on the contrary, means to be paid twice a month, on the 1st and the 15th. This brings about the necessity of people having to budget their salary for two weeks. If they spend the money before, they

are in trouble because the housing project's cooperative store does not allow purchases on credit. MRF employees have the advantage that the MRF runs a cooperative store, where they can buy food on credit. Open credits are then deducted from their two-weekly salary. Therefore, my research partners experience that even though they earn more with regard to their monthly income they have less money available in their pockets. Obviously, living in the housing project triggers changes in the *homepartners'* habitus.

Nanay Corazon's case offers further interesting insights on the social level, which reveal some differences to the case of the wife of Ate Lani's godson. Generally speaking, Nanay Corazon is one of the community's most active leaders. However, since she is working seven days a week in the MRF, she is neither able to participate in most communal activities nor can she be active as an officer in one of the committees. Nevertheless, she is highly appreciated in the community as well as by the NGO employees. The organization and the NGO employees know about her family's situation and her financial priorities to first support her children to finish their studies in order to be financially supported by them in the future. Thus, her absence from communal meetings and activities and delayed amortization payments are accepted as valid reasons for her being in the status as a *member not in good standing*. However, her social acceptance does not change the fact that she is not able to meet the requirements to apply for an electricity connection. Thus, even though she is not yet able to meet the requirements of the communal electricity policies, she is hoping that if she and her family keep working hard they will reach their goal: *paningkamutan lang gyud nato* meaning 'we just keep on working hard'.

The example of Nanay Corazon illustrates a possible impact of the housing project through the example of electricity. Her case gives an idea of the effect and significance of electricity, and how the differences between the living conditions of the former and the present dwelling environment become palpable in the process of transition. This is especially the case for those families who belong to the group of *have-nots*. As pointed out by Nanay Corazon, the absence of water and electricity create a void in what she considers the basic needs to manage everyday life. *Have-nots* experience this void – as I argue – e.g. through the aesthetics of darkness triggering negative feelings about their new being in the world.

The Comfort of Electricity in the Field

I already mentioned that when I prepared my fieldwork I thought of a range of things to investigate regarding the relationship between humans and their material environment. However, electricity was not on my list. Actually, electricity belongs to the things I take for granted in my

everyday life. When I prepared my stay in the housing project, I was informed that the community is connected to the electrical grid. The only thing an NGO-employee was concerned about was that the model house had no air-conditioning. This, however, did not bother me at all. I felt rather privileged to stay in a house with electricity and water installations in comparison to the otherwise usual dwelling conditions of anthropologists in the field. The fact that the community had no running water connection affected my everyday life in the field much more than electricity, despite regular power blackouts. I actually have to admit that electricity made my stay in the field quite comfortable. I was able to use my notebook and install a high-speed Internet connection. These two became the window and the link to the world outside of my field. It provided me with a sense of home, materializing in conversations with family and friends via Skype, pictures, music and access to social media networks. I was able to receive updates about what was going on *at home*. Furthermore, it improved my cooking practices. While my research partners considered a rice cooker the most preferred electric cooking appliance, for me it was an electric oven. It enabled me to cook homemade pizza and to bake birthday cakes for friends and neighbors. Especially with the birthday cake, I really surprised some of my neighbors. In this sense, electricity mattered to me in a different sense compared to my research partners and I only truly realized it in retrospect.

It was first through spending time in Ate Lorna's house without electricity and afterwards through the stories of my research partners, especially Nanay Corazon's, that I realized in what form electricity plays a role for the residents of the housing project. Ate Lorna and her family moved into their new house in April 2011 and were since then processing the documents for their electricity connection. I moved in in June and it only took about a week until the house was connected. In contrast, Ate Lorna did not know how long it would take until they would get their electricity connection. In their former dwelling in the squatter area, they had an authorized electricity connection, which they shared with their subtenants. Thus, they owned some electric devices like a television, a computer, an electric fan, a blender, and a rice cooker. However, in their new house these only served as decoration wrapped in plastic or in their original packaging. Having no electricity mainly impacted her youngest daughter who studied at a university in Cebu City and had to do her assignments in the evening hours in the dark. Before they transferred to the housing project, they bought a computer second hand and signed a 24-months Internet contract so that she could study and prepare for classes and exams at home instead of going to an Internet café and coming home late from the University. However, in their new house they could neither use the computer nor the Internet connection but still had to pay for the contract. When I learned about their unused Internet connection, I suggested to transfer it to my house and offered to cover the monthly payments in exchange, which is what

we did. We also transferred their computer to my upper room so that Lara could study there until they would get their electricity connection. While Ate Lorna's computer was at my place it became the work place for the communal officers who used it to encode their annual reports, for Nikita and Bella to prepare working applications and for Ate Lorna it became the topic of trouble and *chismis* (gossip). During our interview she mentioned that neighbors assumed that Ate Lorna took advantage of our relationship.

Ate Lorna: They [our neighbors] have a different understanding, once they came to my place and I knew that they have some thoughts about it, I heard them talking saying that they believed that Mel paid the costs for electricity and also for the second floor. Then Ms. [...] came and she mentioned something about the computer and then she said 'you want a second floor in your house Ate! Do you charge Mel for it? It seems always when she comes to your place she gives you something, it seems as if you are close with Mel ...' I told her then that yes, we have electricity but it was not Mel who ..., we borrowed the money to have electricity but it was Mel who offered her help because Lara had difficulties to write, it is Mel's wish to come here even though it is difficult but I don't feel ashamed about it, but I feel ashamed about what the neighbors think. We worked hard to get an electricity connection for our student. It was Mel who came over and offered Lara a flashlight so that it is not so difficult to write and for reading. But I thought of the neighbors who are envious, I don't like that because I like to work hard to solve my problems myself and to satisfy whatever we need, even though the others are talking about me this way, I still respect them but it is different now since I know how they are, after the last fiesta we had some leftovers and I still invited them to come over to eat (Interview November 15, 2011, p. 31).

I selected this final statement to highlight the social aesthetics of electricity from a different perspective. As electricity is known as an expensive commodity and only available for those who are in a good financial standing, having or not having electricity becomes a social marker and for Ate Lorna a concern of malicious gossip and suspicions not only from neighbors but also from NGO employees. The fact that she managed to master the challenge of the application procedure for electricity despite the fact that she is widowed and unemployed with her youngest daughter still studying gave rise to the allegation that she took advantage of our relationship. This example again shows the social impact of the conditions of the housing project. The policies in combination with the aesthetics of electricity create an element of social distinction. It should have become apparent that under the conditions of the housing project, electricity becomes a *matter of empowerment* and consequently an aspect of social distinction. Looking back on their former living conditions, access to electricity further becomes a point that reveals the consequences of the performed change of lifestyle. This is furthermore the case when it comes to the billing procedure, an aspect of electricity consumption which is less a social matter. Nevertheless, it also reveals the impact of the relocation, namely with regard to the peripheral location of the housing project and what it entails for the authorized *empowered* consumers. As pointed out in the introductory field report, most of my research partners in the housing project receive an official electricity bill documenting and calculating their electricity consumption for the first time.

Energy needs anthropology – this is Wilhite's appeal to ethnology, because he is certain that theoretical debates on energy use or climate change as well as on other fields in which energy consumption plays a role would benefit from anthropological perspectives (cf. 2005). Based on the insights gained about electricity and its entanglement in the transition process, I also support his argument. As it has become evident, electricity is a matter of power because having or not having electricity makes a difference in the everyday life of people, especially in the 21st century. My research partners' past and present living conditions reveal that nowadays life without electricity is hardly imaginable also for the poor. The case of the housing project thus gives rise to the question: What sort of good is electricity? Is it a basic need or a luxury good? From my perspective, this question cannot be answered for electricity in general but maybe rather for the different physical forms of electricity-based products or commodities produced by electric appliances. From my fieldwork experience and taking my research partners' perspective, I argue that the different physical forms of electricity have different priorities in everyday life. In the physical form of light, electricity is of highest priority, while in the physical form of cold air, it might be rather a luxury good people can manage without. From the NGO's perspective, however, electricity seems to be a luxury good in general. Yet, treating electricity only in general terms ignores that it is of different importance depending on the physical form in which it is consumed. How the NGO deals with the provision with electricity reveals how paternalistic effects arise in the relationship with their supposed (*home*)partners. As such, through the study of electricity consumption from an anthropological perspective we can learn about the relevance of energy incorporated in the organization of everyday life and how it affects the way we experience the world we live in.

In this chapter I examined the question of how the residents of the housing project experience, shape and value the transition from an informal to a formalized way of life in the housing project. With regard to the materials concrete, water and electricity, I have shown that the residents experience the changes in their way of life through their daily interaction with the house in general and these materials in particular. Differences and thus improvements or even deteriorations become perceptible through comparisons between the past and present dwelling experiences. As outlined in chapter 2, from a phenomenological perspective, human orientation takes place in time horizons that not only oscillate between past and present but also include future aspirations. In the last part of this chapter I will therefore give an outlook on future life in the housing project. Here we will meet Ate Lorna and Nanay Corazon again. My observations derive from a one-week visit in the housing project in November 2014.

5.4 PROSPECTION: Eeking out a Promising Future

In December 2012, the NGO formally handed over the responsibilities and management of the housing project to its residents. Hereby, the development of the housing project and the relocation of families from squatter areas and dumpsite settlements were officially completed. This was the time some of my research partners were already longing for at the time of my fieldwork. The residents associated the idea of being able to decide about their lives for themselves with the post-project-period. As I learned during a visit in November 2014, to a certain extent this hope proved to be true. Nevertheless, the policies remained the same but were now interpreted and enforced by the elected leaders of the BEC and Board of Directors. This seemed to give the residents a larger scope for action at their own free discretion. Thus, I noticed for example that men are now more present in the public sphere of the housing site.

As in the chapters before, I will now again focus on the interrelation of the residents and the built material environment of the housing project to show tendencies of future developments. These tendencies further strengthen my main argument that the residents perform the change of lifestyle gradually in the interrelation with the material environment they dwell in. It is a process of mutual shaping. In this process, the residents give shape to their new dwelling environment, as much as the dwelling environment shapes the residents with regard to their habituated practices and ideas about the world they live in.

For the four days of my visit in the housing project in November 2014 I stayed with Ate Lorna and her family. When I arrived, the housing project appeared familiar and strange to me at the same time. The place was more populated than three years ago, not only by people, but also by motorized vehicles (mainly motorcycles) and plants. I instantly realized that the housing project is now supplied with water. The numerous water containers have disappeared in front of the houses and two high-level water tanks are now towering up at the end of both main roads. The wet market has now also been taken into service. The local vendors who used to offer their products under the acacia tree have transferred their former makeshift stall to one of the cemented and roofed ones. Besides them, there are now further women offering snacks and fresh vegetables. The area under the acacia now appears to be rather abandoned. While it used to be the central communal meeting point and point for activities at the time of my fieldwork, it now seems to be a waiting point for a *habol-habol service*, i.e. a transportation service by motorcycle offered by male residents, which did not exist three years earlier. When I passed by the acacia tree, there were some men sitting on a long wooden bench watching the hustle and bustle on the basketball court or waiting on their motorcycles for customers. The so-called *feeding place* also transferred from its former place in the west wing to the communal center in front of the mini clinic so that it is now equally close for all residents. Outside the feeding hours – which

are commonly in the morning – the pavilion now offers a shaded place to linger at the communal center.

The mini clinic, which was under construction when I left the housing project in January 2012, is now in business. Members of the Community Health Volunteers (CHV) offer daily consulting hours and basic medical care for the residents. The German Doctors still come twice a month. The mini clinic is the only building equipped with an air conditioning system. However, only the German Doctors or other visiting doctors benefit from the cool air in order to make the treatment of patients more comfortable for them. The CHVs manage without it because the lamella windows let the cool air escape causing high electricity costs which the community members have to bear. Something the CHVs complained about this when I dropped in. Another problem they mentioned is the poor medicinal equipment. A fact also caused by the small financial means of the community. They mainly rely on donations provided by the NGO. In contrast, the cooperation store next door has grown in stocks. It now offers a wider choice of non-perishable foods and drugstore items. What, is missing, however are the freshly baked goods from the communal bakery that was established/opened during my fieldwork. Apparently, the cooperative has not been able to bring the business up and working, which is another indication for the challenges the cooperative still faces with offering profitable livelihood initiatives.

While walking down the road towards Ate Lorna's house, I noticed that several houses in the west wing of the housing project looked different and more individually designed. Their former collective look has been covered up by plants and flowers, semi-high cemented walls, roofed and fenced entrance areas, and/or fenced areas behind the house. With respect to the construction materials, the applied modes of organization and alteration still range from makeshift to permanent solutions. What most alterations have in common is the tendency to enclose and thus to label one's private property. Something I interpret as the objectification of the new growing *need* to protect one's material belongings. Thus, it seems as if more residents have become capable to shape their houses in accordance with their individual ideas and needs. These alterations and the growth in material belongings created the idea in me that the residents now seem to be better off financially; an idea arising out of the knowledge that, as outlined in chapter 5.1., major alterations require the residents' capability to manage their financial responsibilities as homeowners. At first, I felt impressed by the changes in the west wing. The area looked clean and green, providing a homely atmosphere. Now, the residents' *collective authorship* in shaping the provided material environment has become more tangible. It shows that the residents have started to appropriate the housing project, giving it their own shape and hence a specific aesthetics.

However, a second closer look triggered a contradicting impression. I then also became aware of *houses in between* that in contrast to those altered still looked the same as three years ago or rather worse. They showed signs of decay and weathering or were smeared by children. Especially the wooden parts of the walls looked affected by heavy rain. The wood was splintered and the color flaked off. Those houses reveal that there were also households who still seemed to have difficulties not only to alter their houses but also to maintain them. That this is not only the failure of the residents but also seems to be a challenge arising out of the building materials and the climatic conditions, I became aware of when I visited the mini clinic. The building is only two years old and already shows signs of decay and weathering, too. There are cracks in the wall from the earthquake in 2013 and the wooden window frames are partly rotten. A fact the residents simply live with as the community as well as individual households lack the financial means to repair the buildings themselves.

I experienced a further discrepancy from my initial positive impression when I went for a stroll to the east wing of the housing site. This is the residential area that was finished in 2011. The last one hundred families that were relocated in 2012 from a squatter area in Cebu City, which the government has already demolished several times, occupied this area. In contrast to the rather developed and appropriated residential area in the west wing, the east wing is yet hardly individually shaped and less green, with a few exceptions. Adults were hanging around outside their houses watching the hustle and bustle. Numerous children under five were running around and playing in groups. Some of them were naked; others were dressed (only) in t-shirts reaching down to their knees. Their bodies (still) showed signs of skin diseases caused by the unhygienic living conditions in the squatter area - an indication that they had not yet lived in the housing project for a long time.

In a conversation in Ate Lorna's house, I shared my impressions with my former research assistants and some neighbors. With respect to the east wing, someone commented disparagingly that it looked like a squatter area. The discussion about the condition of the housing project gave way to further complaints. My interlocutors expressed their discontent about certain preconditions of the housing project in comparison with another relocation site of the NGO. There, the houses are completely made of concrete and a second floor is built in. Therefore, they consider these houses to be of higher quality compared with their own. The wooden parts of their houses are – as it shows in the community – vulnerable to damage and thus at a certain point need to be replaced by the residents which causes extra expenses. Furthermore, they have to bear the costs for the construction of a second floor themselves. A further subject of their complaints is the unpaved gravel road. According to the NGO this is to prevent flooding but in the other housing site the roads are paved. The residents consider the gravel road as dirty and as

difficult to keep clean. Therefore, some residents have paved the area in front of their houses with concrete as a means of beautification. These differences between the two housing projects are a result from the lessons learned by the NGO from this housing project, which is the NGO's first and largest relocation initiative.¹³² Despite these dissatisfactions with the living conditions of the housing project, everyone present emphasized that they would not like to return to live in a squatter area, if only because of the comfort of indoor sanitary facilities. Ate Lorna's daughter e.g. pointed out that she could no longer imagine to bathe in clothes and while everybody is watching because it is too complicated and unpleasant.

The comfort of the *comfort room* (cf. 5.1) has further increased since the provision with running water is guaranteed in the housing project. As of 2012, the cooperation offers a provision with water from two deep wells. The two high-level water tanks and water pipelines now allow the residents the acquisition of running water inside the house. That is the reason why the water containers have disappeared except for one remaining under the downspout, as gathering rainwater still remains a favored form of water acquisition. This is especially the case for those households who are not yet able to afford a running water connection and thus still have to acquire water from an external source and store it in containers for daily use. As I learned from my research partners, access to an indoor running water supply has become – like access to electricity – a matter of a household's financial capacities. The reason here is not only the (in comparison with electricity relatively small) initial connection fee charged by the cooperative, but rather the costs incurred in the installation because, as it turned out, the preinstalled water outlets and water lines inside the house first have to be renewed as they were already rotten after five years of non-use. This turned out to be the reason why a number of households still have no running water supply inside their house.

Nevertheless, the acquisition of water is now more comfortable as it is available close to the house. For the supply of households without a running water connection, five public water outlets have been installed in the housing site: one at each water tank, one in the middle of each main road, and one in the communal center. These are, however, not freely accessible for the residents. Only the two water officials (one in charge for each road) are allowed to operate them. Now, the water officials themselves supply households with water by hose. Relying on a water delivery thus still involves the storing of water and dependence on the availability and schedule of the water officials. Nevertheless, buying water from the *hose* is cheaper than what the residents paid for water delivered by truck. Gathering rainwater or fetching water from the

¹³² Already after few years of construction and development of the first housing project, the NGO realized that their *homepartners* have difficulties to develop their houses further, like by constructing a second floor. Therefore, they decided to install a second floor right away in the houses of the second relocation site.

deep well outside the housing project continues to present the cheapest form of water acquisition, as it is free. However, as I was told, the residents gave up fetching water from the deep well. Hence, Ate Hilda's concern which she mentioned in the interview in 2011 came true, namely that with the provision of running water the residents finally have to pay for everything. The provision with running water has changed the specific aesthetics of the housing project in terms of the materials used by households for water consumption on the one hand and the rhythm of daily chores on the other hand. The water containers no longer characterize the house front aesthetics, there are no longer people driving back and forth from the house to the deep well with empty or full water tanks, and a rain shower is no longer the reason for interrupting meetings or getting up at night. Instead, these specific characteristics of the housing project's aesthetics have either disappeared or been partially replaced by the water hose that the water officials now carry from house to house. With the introduction of a running water supply and the preconditions and requirements for its indoor access, the residents become once more divided in *haves* and *have-nots*, as it is already the case with access to electricity. The central factor creating this difference is again the financial means of a household. It creates a perceptible social difference between neighbors, showing their different (financial) capabilities in fulfilling the responsibilities of homeowners. Access to running water and electricity and the altered design of one's house thus objectify in how far the residents are able to perform a change of lifestyle - a finding that shows itself in the above-described social aesthetics of the housing project and how these have developed within these three years. I now briefly underline how this now reveals in the individual level of two specific households, by comparing the living conditions of Ate Lorna and Nanay Corazon in 2014.

Ate Lorna: The Impact of Remittances

At the time of my visit in November 2014, Ate Lorna lived together with her oldest son and her youngest daughter. Nikita (my former research assistant) and her second oldest brother are now both working abroad. Since I left the housing project in January 2012, Ate Lorna's house has changed its appearance a lot both inside and outside. In contrast to three and a half years before, Ate Lorna's house has transformed from a two-room to a five-room building. She now has a second floor with two separate sleeping rooms. Here, curtains serve as *doors*. Downstairs, she constructed a wooden makeshift extension in the one-meter-area behind the house. The extension serves as a sleeping room for her oldest son on one side and as a dirty kitchen on the other side. She also enclosed the one-meter-area in front of the house with a medium-high cemented wall. Hereby, she has not only created separate areas inside the house, but has also marked the

external borders of her property. Like the communal buildings, she also fenced the windows downstairs. She covered the cemented flooring and sidewalls in bathroom and kitchen area as well as the cemented sink with tiles.¹³³ The walls are now painted white. She decorated them with framed pictures and souvenirs from all over the world, which Nikita brought home from her travels overseas. I also recognized a major change in Ate Lorna's furnishing. Nikita and her sister now have proper beds in their sleeping rooms upstairs. Ate Lorna's plank bed also moved upstairs. It now serves as an extra place to sleep in the open area in front of the sleeping rooms. Ate Lorna, however, prefers to sleep downstairs because there it is less *alimúut* (stuffy). In the living area, an upholstered sofa and armchair replace the plank bed as main seating. A tea table and a plastic bench complete the new furnishing in the living area. In the kitchen area, there is now a dining table with matching chairs replacing her former homemade and plastic furniture. Their former kitchen table has been converted into a wardrobe and the plastic stackable stools now only serve as extra chairs. For her cups and plates, boxes and small electric appliances, she installed a shelf at head level on the wall besides the sink under the stairway. She covered the open shelf compartments with transparent plastic foil, which she fixed with scribes in the top corners and which can be folded upward. Another shelf is attached to the wall above the refrigerator where she stores a range of different non-perishable foods. It caused a visitor to ask Ate Lorna if she operates a secret *sari-sari* business, which she denies. She argued that having certain foods at home means that she does not have to go to the cooperative store every day. This also reveals a difference in Ate Lorna's consumption practices. Three years before, she only used to have main nutrition at home like salt, vinegar, oil and rice but these also only in little quantities.

Ate Lorna has furthermore extended her household electric appliances with a refrigerator, a washing machine and a laptop. She uses the refrigerator to keep fruit and especially drinks cold and to produce ice water, which she sells to neighbors on demand. In contrast to the refrigerator that from Ate Lorna's perspective makes a positive difference in her life, the washing machine mainly remains in the corner underneath the stairway. She does not actually like to use it. Nikita, who thought it would make doing the laundry more comfortable for her mother, had given it to her. However, Ate Lorna still rather prefers to do the laundry by hand, because – as she argues – that is what she is used to and it is the best way to get the clothes clean. The laptop is of highest importance for Ate Lorna. It is a gift from her son working in Saudi Arabia. It enables her to keep in touch with her children working abroad via Facebook or Skype (almost daily).

¹³³ On the last morning of my stay in Ate Lorna's house, neighbors and the two former NGO employees came over for a visit. Ate Lorna's tiles became a recurring topic of discussion among the visitors. They asked Ate Lorna where she got the tiles from, how expensive they were and discussed the color.

The laptop replaces her old computer. Three years before, she did not know how to work with a computer. But out of her desire to keep close contact with her children she has acquired basic knowledge to handle these programs. Besides these new appliances, I was amused by the fact that she still has the old green rice cooker that was already partly damaged three years before. Nevertheless, as argued by Ate Lorna, it is still working. Thus, she will probably keep on cooking with it until it breaks completely.

There is a further change in Ate Lorna's house. She now has a running water connection. However, like in most houses, Ate Lorna first had to renew the old preinstalled water lines and outlets on her own expense because they were already rotten. Thus, the provision with running water, along with the initial connection fee charged by the cooperative, caused extra expenses. Nevertheless, water consumption is now much more comfortable as she only has to open the faucet when she needs water. While the running water connection transformed the way she acquires water, the way she consumes water (e.g. in the bathroom) has remained the same, namely by scooping. When she renewed the water outlets, she dismantled the preinstalled showerhead and replaced it with a faucet. Under the faucet, she placed the water container, which she used to collect rainwater before. Thus, for taking a shower or for flushing the toilet, she still scoops out water from the water container. For washing clothes, which she still does in front of her house, she simply fetches water from the faucet she installed on her veranda.

The way Ate Lorna has newly organized and designed her house shows a shift in her modes of organization. They have *partially* shifted from their former makeshift aesthetics to an aesthetics of persistence (as I call it), that Miller calls homogeneity. But the kitchen shelf and the construction of the dirty kitchen express that makeshift solutions remain part of her modes of organization. Nevertheless, what makes this shift possible is first of all the house made of concrete. It offers a concrete foundation enabling the residents to make permanent alterations like laying tiles, which is pointless in makeshift dwellings threatened by natural forces and demolition. The shift in Ate Lorna's modes of organization moreover objectifies the efforts of her two children working abroad, especially Nikita. Despite her absence, Nikita is present in the furniture and souvenirs decorating the walls. She has invested most of her income earned abroad in the alteration and furnishing of the house. This would not have been possible without her remittances. As such she remains present and involved in the family's change of lifestyle despite her absence. Against the background of Ate Lorna's biography, it shows that her children continue the path she and her husband took almost thirty years ago back in Bohol.

Nanay Corazon: No Electricity, No Water

The case of Nanay Corazon offers a different example. Before I arrived in the housing project in 2014, I was wondering if Nanay Corazon finally has an electricity connection, which I actually expected to be the case, assuming that her oldest daughter was still employed at a banking institute. On my arrival, Nanay Corazon was part of my welcome committee and accompanied me together with some other neighbors to Ate Lorna's house. In our conversation, it became obvious that Nanay Corazon has not found a different employment since her contract had not been renewed at the MRF in December 2011. Her unemployment has at least enabled her to actively participate and engage in community affairs again and to lead the children's choir. Apart from her, her husband's job situation of also changed. He gave up driving a taxi because they considered it too dangerous because of the attacks on taxi-drivers still happening, especially at night. Instead, he now tries to make a living by offering delivery services for street vendors at the main market in the city. Her oldest daughter also changed jobs. She gave up working for the banking institute in favor of a better-paid employment at a call center. And her youngest daughter finished high school and is at that time training in hospitality management, a program sponsored by the NGO.¹³⁴ During my visit, I conducted an informal interview with Nanay Corazon at her house. When I asked her if we could she accepted - commenting that I should not expect too much because they are still poor. The condition of her house expressed what she meant with this statement.

In comparison to Ate Lorna's house, Nanay Corazon's house has hardly changed. Except for the second floor, which they already constructed in December 2011, the interior and exterior shape of their house remained almost the same. They still have no electricity connection because of the expenses for the initial connection fee. These are now even higher than three years ago.¹³⁵ As they do not like to manage without electric light in the evening hours, they sometimes use a generator for certain periods or connect to the motor of their *multicap*. However, as pointed out by Nanay Corazon, it is not the same as with an electricity connection, which would make it possible to produce, besides bright light (with electric bulbs), cool air (with a refrigerator), airflow (with an electric fan), entertainment (with a TV) and, furthermore, rice (with a rice cooker). Nanay Corazon is well aware of the fact that using the generator or the *multicap* to produce electricity is much more expensive than a proper connection. However, when they had to decide whether to invest in a *multicap* or in an electricity connection, they decided to buy the *multicap*: first, because they can earn a living with it, and second, because they could

¹³⁴ It is the same program my research assistant Nikita took after high school. There are a number of other (mainly female) high school graduates from the housing project who undergo this program as it offers the prospect to work abroad afterwards and travel the world, as the case of Nikita shows.

¹³⁵ While in 2011 the initial connection fee was PhP 7,500, it now costs about PhP 12,000.

buy it on credit. For the electricity connection they still lack the permission of the BOD because of remaining open balances for the house (cf. chapter 5.3). This fact now also keeps them from applying for a running water connection. Thus, they rely either on gathering rainwater or on buying water from the water official. For Nanay Corazon, the daily acquisition of water is now more comfortable and cheaper than three years before (a barrel of water (200l) now only costs PhP 15.00 instead of PhP 35.00). However, compared with her neighbors with a water connection it is still more expensive and more complicated because it depends on the availability and presence of the water officials. When Nanay Corazon is urgently in need of water, she sometimes asks a neighbor. They are only allowed to give water for free but not to sell it, as it was common in the squatter areas, to prevent the creation of small-scale businesses between neighbors that would compete with the water business of the cooperative. Nevertheless, Nanay Corazon has not given up her hope that one day they will pay off their remaining open balances and finally shape and develop their house in accordance with their needs and ideas. And as long as her daughters do not get married, they can rely on their financial support.

The cases of Ate Lorna and Nanay Corazon show that while it was the parent generation that laid the foundation for a change of lifestyle with moving to the housing project, it is the children's generation that plays a major role in fulfilling this endeavor. Comparing the living conditions of Ate Lorna and Nanay Corazon reveals that even though they were confronted with more or less the same preconditions, they deal differently with the requirements and obligations involved in dwelling in the housing project. The central factor that creates these differences is the means of livelihood a household is able to generate. This actually shows the shortcoming, not primarily of the residents but of the housing project itself. As outlined in chapter 4, one of the major goals of the housing project is to offer its residents livelihood initiatives enabling them to meet their financial obligations as homeowners. However, the NGO has not yet succeeded in empowering the cooperative to create livelihood initiatives going beyond small-scale employment. The result is that on the one hand the residents are now facing higher costs involved in dwelling and living in the housing project, and on the other hand they have more difficulties to generate sufficient incomes. This is much more difficult within the formalized and policy-based living conditions of the housing project than before in their informal niche existences in the squatter areas and dumpsite settlements. A consequence not only of the missing livelihood initiatives but also of the *Occupancy Rules and Deeds of Restriction* enforcing a transformation of the residents' habituated consumption practices and economic strategies common for an informal lifestyle, i.e. living out of the pocket.

During my visit in 2014, it became apparent that the residents have started to appropriate and shape the public space of the housing site more strongly in accordance with their needs and ideas. I gained the impression that the residents now interpret the communal policies more liberally and less rigorously and that they have regained a larger scope for action.

6 CONCLUSION

Two steps forward, one step back – This is the movement of the pilgrim dance which the residents perform when crossing the threshold to the housing project during the Ritual of Transfer. This movement is like an embodied symbolic expression of my research partners' hopes and fears towards their decision to move to the housing project and to perform a change of lifestyle. Based on the phenomenological approach of experience, I further interpret this movement as the embodied expression of humans' orientation in time (cf. chapter 2). In the light of the impending change of lifestyle, my research partners experience it as taking *two steps forward* towards a safe and promising future and *one step back* based on the fear of not being able to meet the obligations of a *homepartner* on the one hand, and on the reluctance to forgo the advantages of their former niche existence. As it became evident in the analysis, these attitudes and feelings towards the change of lifestyle remain in effect throughout the transition process. This transition process from an informal, marginalized and self-organized lifestyle in a squatter area or dumpsite settlement to an institutionalized and policy-based life in a socialized housing project has been the subject of this ethnographic study that is based on four main questions:

- (1) How do the residents *experience* the transition from their former informal, marginalized and self-organized lifestyle in a squatter area or dumpsite settlement to the institutionalized and policy-based life in the socialized housing project?
- (2) How do they *respond* to the new (material) living conditions?
- (3) How do they *feel* in their new living environment; and
- (4) How do they *value* the performed change of lifestyle?

I designed the thesis as polyphonic ethnography with a theoretical focus on material cultural studies and aesthetics. With this theoretical perspective, I analyzed the interrelation of the residents and their (built) material environments as well as the resulting effects, i.e. the implicit mutual shaping processes. By focusing on the three materials concrete, water and electricity, I have shown that the residents experience the change of lifestyle and thus the new social, political and economic conditions in their daily interaction with the house, its specific materiality, its facilities and the resources provided or absent, and thus through its aesthetics. In the following I will summarize my main findings.

The Promises of Concrete

A nice house in proper conditions – this is what my research partners expected when they moved to the housing project. In the analysis of the interrelationship of my research partners and their new houses made of concrete (cf. chapter 5.1), I have shown that the material of concrete positively affects my research partners' feelings towards their new dwelling environment. They feel proud about their nice-looking houses, which now satisfy their need for safety and thus create a prospect for the future. This feeling results primarily from the aesthetics of the house, which triggers positive effects, such as

- (1) an improved sense of self,
- (2) a prospect for the future,
- (3) an improved sense of safety, and
- (4) an improvement of the residents' general health conditions.

These are the *promises* the residents associate with their new houses. It seems as if the material of concrete and its aesthetics in the first sense satisfy their expectations of now living a better life in a *nice house in proper conditions*. Besides the material of concrete, it is the CR and with it the availability of indoor sanitary facilities by which the residents experience the main improvement of their living conditions with regard to (visual) privacy, hygiene and comfort, health and protection.

My research partners experience the differences between their past and present dwelling conditions sensorily through their daily physical engagement with their new house. Its specific material conditions, its affordances and constraints give rise to new experiences and needs. It summons its residents to respond to the unfinished interior design of the house in general and to the specific thermal qualities of concrete in particular. In the analysis of how my research partners respond to the house and its conditions I have shown that the residents appropriate their house only gradually. It is a process varying in its duration from household to household. Based on my fieldwork experiences of 2011 and my visit in November 2014, I identified two main modes of organization, which, as I argue, reflect the residents' state of transformation. I consider these two aesthetics the material objectifications of the respective states of transition from the initial phase of adapting to the new material environment of the house to the phase of its appropriation. In the phase of adaptation, my research partners apply habituated modes of organization, which are characterized by temporary, multipurpose and makeshift solutions; a mode of organization that is characteristic for their former uncertain informal lifestyles. Therefore, I called this mode of organization makeshift aesthetics. The phase of adaptation is also the

phase within which the mutual shaping process between the house and its residents is more strongly affected by the house. In this phase, the residents make themselves familiar with the materials, structure and facilities of the house and adapt habituated practices to its conditions. The longer this phase lasts, the more the residents rather feel like a *tenant* than a *homeowner* as they struggle to meet the obligations involved in dwelling. The second mode of organization I called the aesthetics of persistence to highlight the transition from adapting to the conditions of the house to appropriating the house in accordance with the residents' own ideas and wishes. This mode of organization objectifies a change in the resident's attitude towards their house. Now they are capable to manage the responsibilities and obligations involved in dwelling which is like a confirmation of their new status as *homeowner*. This is a general perspective on the modes of organization in the housing project and how they can be interpreted. Ate Janis's case, however, revealed an exception. It shows that the financial capabilities of the residents are not inevitably the decisive factor for appropriating the house but rather the respective consumption strategies, which seemed to change in response to the house. While most of my research partners made use of discarded materials to construct or alter their former dwellings, they now prefer to use new and proper materials for the interior design. Ate Janis and her husband, on the contrary, keep up *scavenging consumption strategies*, as I would call it. As I have shown, this enabled them to make major alterations in the house only a few weeks after they moved in while other residents decided to put up with the shell condition of their house for months or sometimes years because of lacking financial means to buy construction materials.

Applying the considerations on the intimate link between house and body outlined in chapter 5.1 to the interrelation between the residents and their houses, the impression arises that when moving into the housing project not only the house is in raw state, but also the residents themselves. The house in a concrete and the residents in a rather abstract sense insofar as the residents are not like white canvas. They all have their own biography and are already socialized in a certain way. However, in the Ritual of Transfer they leave behind their former lives and perform a ritual cleansing symbolizing their readiness to be newly shaped. That the NGO aims to – as they call it – *bring about change* is based on their Human and Community Development Program (outlined in chapter 4). While the NGO aims to explicitly evoke transformation by a range of different activities and trainings, I argue that the built material environment and its social aesthetics likewise affect changes, but implicitly. By providing its beneficiaries with a house in shell condition instead of providing them with a fully furnished and finished environment the NGO aims to involve the residents in the further development of the housing project in order to shape it according to their ideas and needs so that they will be able to have a self-contained life in the future. Spoken in the terms of MacDougall I therefore argue that the NGO

urges its *homepartners* to become active authors in the creation of a social landscape that they shape in accordance with their ideas and wishes of a future home to be.

However, while the NGO considers the appropriation of the house part of the residents' participation process and as an investment in their future, appropriating the house, from my perspective, presents the major challenge for the residents in performing a change of lifestyle, especially because of the financial obligations involved. Therefore I argue that the state of development of the house actually becomes a material objectification of the state of development and thus of the state of transformation of the *homepartners*. This I became most aware of in retrospect, i.e. through my short visit in the housing project in November 2014. It was only then that I realized that at the time of my fieldwork (in 2011) most of my research partners were still in an early phase of the transition process, which reflected in what I call the *makeshift aesthetics* of the houses.

While the further development of the house is the responsibility of the residents, the provision of a water supply system is the responsibility of the NGO. As I have shown in chapter 5.2, this part of the infrastructure measures of the housing project had not yet been conclusively resolved. This meant that the residents could now enjoy the comfort of the sanitary facilities in the house, but without the provision with running water let alone well water. In the following I will summarize how the residents reacted to these circumstances and how they have affected their assessment of their new life in the housing project.

Water – A Scarce and Expensive Resource

In chapter 5.2, I discussed water consumption practices (with a focus on the acquisition of domestic water) and how these are affected by the indoor sanitary facilities on the one hand and the absence of a running water connection on the other hand. Although the residents were used to consuming water from an external source, the dwelling conditions in the housing project create a different situation: The distance to the water source (in case of the deep well) and the use of sanitary facilities create the need to consume an increased amount of water in or at the house and not like before right at the source. These circumstances have further created the need to store water for the daily consumption at the house - a fact by which a *local knowledge* about different qualities and consumption practices of water developed.

In response to these specific circumstances (at the time of my fieldwork and before), the residents have developed three strategies of domestic water acquisition:

- (1) fetching water from a deep well,
- (2) gathering rain, and
- (3) buying water from a truck.

These three strategies vary in financial expenses, physical effort, temporal expenditure and the actual availability of water. While the latter form gives the residents a foretaste of the comfort of a running water provision and its expenses, the former two rather resemble their habituated water acquisition practices, with gathering rain being rather an exception. In this context, I have shown that the absence of a running water supply has created a niche which has offered the residents a certain freedom to act, as access to water has not yet been subject to the communal policies. That changed with the introduction of a running water supply in 2012.

The example of water acquisition reveals that the condition of the water infrastructure produce changes on four different levels of water consumption practices:

- (1) It heightens the importance of water in the residents' new daily lives.
- (2) It illustrates the process by which water that used to be free is commoditized.
- (3) Due to the absence of a water source, water becomes part of an exchange relationship between neighbors, through which they negotiate social differences.
- (4) The interaction of the improved quality of the dwelling environment on the one hand and the lack of water on the other hand has the effect of changing the way in which the residents perceive, treat and value rain. What used to be a threat to life turned into God's blessing.

From my perspective, the main transformation triggered by the gap in the water supply system is how the residents perceive and relate to rain, which is an effect of the concrete house and the communal drainage system offering protection against heavy rain and flooding - natural forces, which used to be one of the primary concerns of informal squatter settlers and dumpsite dwellers. While in their former dwelling environment, heavy rain triggered existential fears, rain now causes a certain excitement: It confirms the residents of living in a safe house, and announces the availability of free domestic water delivered right to the house.

Based on my own experience of relying on rain for domestic water consumption and on those of my research partners, I argue that the experience of rain triggers aesthetic experiences in the transition process by which the residents also strongly experience the differences of their past and present living conditions on the level of safety.

In summary, the missing access to running water not only changed the residents' perspective of rain, but of water in general. The residents considered it one of the major problems they were

facing in their new daily routines. However, in contrast to access to electricity, water consumption presented a challenge all residents were equally affected by. Gathering rain even became a central feature in the development of a collective identity, which is something I also became aware of through my own experiences and involvement in the field. They considered me as part of the family because, like everyone else, I got up at night to collect rain. In 2014, I learned that with the introduction of a running water provision, collecting rain lost its identity-building effect. Now, access to water is no longer a matter of time and physical effort but a matter of financial prosperity and hence, like access to electricity, becomes a social marker dividing the residents into *haves* and *have-nots*. A fact revealing that the transition from an informal lifestyle and a niche existence to a formalized and policy-based way of life entails a transition into a thoroughly capitalistic system that slowly supersedes the mentality to *live out of the pocket*.

Electricity – A Luxury Good or a Basic Need?

Besides access to water, access to electricity is a central matter for my research partners in the transition process from life in a squatter area or dumpsite settlement to the housing project. To my research partners, electricity matters first as the necessary precondition to produce light, airflow, sounds and entertainment. In the squatter areas, electricity was accessible through joint effort. Therefore, most of my research partners were *connected*. They took electricity for granted. It was entangled in daily activities, in the interaction with others and in the organization of everyday life. Hence, they were already used to its different *tastes* and *effects*. Despite or even because of the poor living conditions in the squatter areas, electricity in its different physical forms generated a sense of *well-being* and *comfort*. Especially *electric light* offers alleviation in the organization of everyday life. It enables people to perform indoor activities independent of the day-night-rhythm and furthermore produces a sense of safety as together with electric sounds it keeps evil spirits away. Therefore, my research partners highly value electricity.

Under the new living conditions of the housing project, electricity turns out to be an *exclusive good* due to the communal policies regulating its access. Unauthorized, i.e. joint connections are prohibited and permission to apply for an electricity connection is only granted to *homepartners* who prove their ability to meet their financial obligations for the house and in addition for an electricity connection. From the perspective of the NGO, these policies are supposed to prevent *homepartners* from spending their (limited) financial means on electricity bills instead of buying food for their children. From the perspective of my research partners, the provision with electricity and water forms the basis for a state of dwelling that they call *complete*. In contrast

to the provision with water, the provision with electricity is a matter of empowerment in the transition process (at least as long as the provision with running water had not yet been available). In the context of the housing project, access to an electricity connection becomes a matter of good economic and social performance. While the NGO regards this procedure as part of their concept of empowerment and poverty alleviation, my research partners rather experience this procedure as paternalism. This is especially the case for those who have no electricity connection. For them, living in *a nice house in proper conditions* but without access to electricity has negative impacts on their satisfaction about the performed change of lifestyle. It contradicts their expectations. The restrictive access to electricity hence creates differences between neighbors, which become perceptible in the aesthetics of a house without electricity connection. It is a socially effective aesthetics as it marks those *homepartners* who struggle to meet their (generally financial) obligations. At this point, the question may arise why the residents are so dissatisfied with this directive, since it goes without saying, in a way, that it is necessary to be able to afford electricity. From the residents' perspective it is not the costs of electricity consumption that cause them to fail, but the initial connection fee which most of them cannot afford, even if they did receive permission from the NGO to apply for an electricity connection. The reason for their dissatisfaction, therefore, is that the NGO does not allow them to share an electricity connection with neighbors, as they did in the squatter settlements.

This further leads me to the relevance of considering aesthetics for the analysis of electricity consumption practices. As outlined in this chapter, the aesthetics of certain electric products generate effects on a social and emotional level. For the present case study, these effects are of high relevance in order to better understand how my research partners experience and feel about their performed change of life style. The analysis shows that the way my research partners evaluate their *new life* in the housing project is based on past and present experiences as well as on future aspirations. Therefore I argue that the experience of certain electric products triggers aesthetic experiences. They are embodied and become taken for granted like *the comfort of electric light*. Only in the moment or time when they are absent do people become aware of their importance for their everyday life. This is one of the central features of electricity as infrastructure as defined by Star and Ruthleder (1996/1999). With regard to the interrelation of people and their dwelling environment, the services and products offered by electric devices generate a range of effects: They trigger emotions and can transform habituated practices, which in turn can have (positive or negative) effects on people's sense of safety and well-being. Furthermore, having or not-having electricity makes social differences between neighbors perceivable, especially through the aesthetics of light.

Considering the findings from the analysis together it becomes evident that the transition process to the socialized housing project is characterized by what my research partners call the *necessity to adjust* to the new living conditions on the material, social, political and especially on the economic level. In this process, they repeatedly compare past and present living experiences and expected living conditions. As I have shown, the differences between their experiences and expectations trigger ambivalent feelings towards their new way of life, varying between satisfaction, disappointment and overstrain. This can partially be explained by the reasons for which they decided to move to the housing project. As outlined in chapter 4, the decision to move was less motivated by the dwelling conditions of the squatter areas and dumpsite settlements per se than by the existential fears of not knowing if tomorrow will come - a fear triggered by the potential threat of forced eviction or natural forces which both entailed the probability of losing one's house and thus one's most important basis in life, i.e. one's abode. For the dumpsite dwellers, the introduction of waste segregation created a further decisive factor, because as a result they lost their second most important basis in life, i.e. access to their primary source of income. Hence, from my research partners' perspective, moving to the housing project offered the only prospect of a safe dwelling place and a positive future prospect for their children, knowing well that they will have to give up the advantages of their niche existence especially with regard to economic and infrastructural advantages.

In the transition process, the *need to adjust* is a mutual process. Not only the residents have to adjust to the new living conditions but also the conditions have to be equally developed in accordance with the residents' needs, ideas and expectations. The primary need for most of the residents is to find a new reliable source of income which enables them to earn enough money to fulfill the financial obligations of *homepartners* and the extra expenses involved in dwelling in the housing project. During my visit in the housing project in 2014, it became obvious, however, that the NGO had not yet been able to achieve this project goal. Instead of continuing to focus on livelihood development inside the housing project, they started a cooperation with a manufacturing company in Lapu-Lapu City in order to offer the residents alternative employment opportunities. Nevertheless, there is still a lack of sufficient employment and thus income opportunities especially for those residents who have difficulties to find an employment on the general labor market due to their low educational level or (advanced) age. While in their former niche existence they usually found a way to earn - as they called it - *quick money*, this is either more difficult or even impossible in the housing project because of the communal policies and the peripheral location.

With reference to what Nadeau (2002) has pointed out about BECs, it has become evident in this book that by implementing all three types of BEC activities, i.e. liturgical, developmental,

and transformative activities as basic activities of the HCD-Program, the NGO pursues an ambitious project. At the level of the health and education systems, the project shows visible results through the expansion of the infrastructure and especially by providing indoor sanitary facilities. However, the housing project and its residents face extreme challenges at the developmental level. Implementing adequate developmental activities like livelihood initiatives that meet the economic needs of the residents have turned out to be most difficult. From the NGO's point of view, the housing project is their biggest project which is based on the financial support of donors, especially from Germany, to whom they have to give account. Hence, for them, the socialized housing project becomes a question of success or failure. From the residents' perspective, on the contrary, socialized living is a question of existence, since for most of them returning to the squatter area, dumpsite settlement or province is not an option. As the six biographies in chapter 3 show, the socialized housing project represents the final destination of their journey from rural areas to the city - a journey that has been inspired by the hope to find employment in the city and access to a better education for themselves and/or their children. But as was the case with the Israelites, reaching the supposed *Promised Land* is only the beginning of the next challenge, namely the process of adapting and asserting oneself to the new living environment and its specific conditions.

With regard to the question of how the residents experience and value the performed change of lifestyle I come to the following conclusion. My research partners experience the transition process as ambivalent: an effect resulting from the comparison between past and present living conditions and the resulting advantages and disadvantages. At first, by moving to the housing project the residents experience an enhancement of their social status. While they used to feel ashamed of their house and their living environment in the squatter areas or dumpsite settlements, they now feel proud. As I have shown, this is an effect of the material concrete and the design of the housing project's infrastructure. However, this positive feeling of social enhancement is diminished in the transition process if the residents struggle to meet the new (financial) requirements and obligations as a *homepartner*. As a result of the prevailing communal policies, they experience a restriction of their former freedom of action, which they experience e.g. in their effort to appropriate the house as well as in habituated consumption practices.

With moving to the housing project, a transformation also occurs with regard to their membership and leadership obligations in the BEC. While BEC activities in the squatter areas and in the dumpsite settlement used to be more of a welcome leisure activity, active membership is now mandatory. Leadership activities like those of the Board of Directors are moreover quite time-consuming. This often results in a conflict between the fulfillment of membership obligations

on the one hand and family responsibilities on the other. Working women are particularly affected by this. For women, the need to work mainly arises from the greater financial burden associated with living in the housing project. While informal income generating activities common in squatter areas and dumpsite settlements could well be combined with caring for the family, in the housing project this has become rather impossible as it would compete with communal livelihood initiatives and would furthermore undermine the communal policies. Hence, the biggest challenges for the residents are to meet the financial obligations, to adapt to the formalized and policy-based lifestyle in the housing project and hence to change habits in order to successfully perform a change of lifestyle. Even though most of the residents struggle with these new living conditions and sometimes miss the advantages of their former niche existence, most of the residents now look ahead to the future in the good faith that *God will provide*.

EPILOGUE

Doing ethnographic fieldwork, even though it aims to give a holistic account of a *lifeworld*, is always only able to describe this *lifeworld* from certain perspectives. In the process of my fieldwork, my perspective shifted from the perspective of the NGO employees – who were my initial gatekeepers introducing me into their different projects and activities – towards the perspective of the residents. I became a sort of mediator between these two parties. However, through living in the housing project, it is the perspective of the residents, with which I actually *identified* more strongly. Through my *being-in-the-field*, I shared everyday (sensory) experiences with my research partners and thus learned what it means to live in the housing project, about the infrastructural and social challenges involved, about the ambivalences and contradictions arising out of a comparison between past and present dwelling experiences as well as the project's vision and actual life. My methodological approach of participant observation conceptualized as based on aesthetic experiences, allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the specific living conditions. At this point, I therefore argue that considering aesthetic concepts in the further development of the methodology of participant observation is productive. It enables the ethnographer to sensitize for her/his own sensory experiences and their value for the ethnographic knowledge process. Aesthetic concepts should encourage ethnographers to take into account their sensory experiences and include them in their ethnographic data, especially those made in the early phase of ethnographic fieldwork, as this is the transition phase from living and working at home to working in the field. In addition, I suggest that the ethnographer includes selected sensory experiences in the main ethnography of her/his fieldwork instead of in a separate publication in order to give the reader a more vivid impression of the *lifeworld* under study. Furthermore, it creates transparency of the research process. In the present study, this approach is the logical consequence of considering aesthetic concepts. It furthermore led to the decision to design the thesis as a theoretical, polyphonic ethnography. By applying a material cultural approach interested in the interrelationship of people and their (built) material environment as well as in consumption practices, I have shown that by transferring to the socialized housing project the residents perform a change of lifestyle that is characteristic for a transition from a traditional to a modern way of life. Most of my research partners already set this transition in motion when they gave up their rural lifestyle as subsistence farmers for a life in the city. However, living in an urban squatter area or dumpsite settlement rather presents a transitional form characterized by vernacular dwelling in a modern infrastructural environment, something that actually highlights the advantages of an urban niche existence. With transferring to the housing project, the residents give up their traditional way of dwelling and for the first

time have access to modern (indoor) infrastructure with sanitary facilities and running water supply as well as the stability of a concrete house. This change of lifestyle is characterized by what I have called a transition from temporary and makeshift to permanent solutions and furthermore, what Miller has pointed out as common for modern societies a transition from production to consumption.

At the end of this ethnographic research project the question now arises: what do the residents of the housing project in general and my research partners in particular gain from this ethnography? This is not an easy question, but it is an important one. Now, seven years after my fieldwork, it is unlikely that the residents of the housing project will directly benefit from my findings, e.g. in terms of a change in policies. The project is largely completed. Since the end of 2012, the residents themselves have been responsible for shaping life in the community. However, NGO employees continue to support and advise the residents in terms of community building and livelihood development.

I see the decisive contribution of this work for my research partners and the residents of the housing project in the recognition and appreciation of what they have experienced and gone through in their lives. During my fieldwork I experienced several times that residents were asked to give their experiences from the squatter areas at official events such as the *Ritual of Transfer* or visits of project partners and funding organizations. In these reports, they have exclusively addressed the burden and hardship of their former informal lifestyle. In the interviews, however, I noticed that my research partners also associate positive aspects with their previous lives. Aspects they now sometimes look back on nostalgically. As discussed in chapter 3, the house plays a crucial role in this context. My research partners feel intimately linked with their former houses especially in those cases in which they had built it themselves out of their own efforts. Their former house is a memento of their family history. In this respect, this book aims to give a more holistic account of the *lifeworld* of squatter and dumpsite settlers and highlighting and recognizing their efforts which are normally overlooked. Taking their perspectives into account, it becomes clear that the housing project is (hopefully) the last milestone on the road out of poverty and into a better future. Even if, as I have shown, it brings with it new challenges. Focusing on the perspective of the residents furthermore enabled me to reveal the effects the HCD-Program produces. While the NGO undoubtedly intends to create liberating effects with the HCD-Program, the resident experience these rather as paternalistic. With the *Pledge of Occupancy*, the *homepartners* accept to behave in compliance with the *Occupancy Rules and Deeds of Restrictions* and furthermore to prove active membership and (in case of election) to

take over leadership responsibilities. This puts the residents in a situation in which they renounce their former freedom of action and accept that they are *taught* how to live *properly* from the NGO's point of view. Through my ethnographic fieldwork I have gained the impression that the measures of the HCD-Program do not empower the residents, but rather make them dependent on the offers the project provides or not. This means that they are not taking the initiative themselves, as they have done so far, but are waiting for the NGOs to act and make a proposal. This applies in particular to business start-up initiatives for those residents who have few opportunities to find a job on the labor market due to their low level of education or their age. Given this background, I consider this ethnography as an important contribution to the relocation studies, as it reveals the emic perspective of the residents who live under the conditions of such a project and will have to spend the rest of their lives there. Therefore, the thesis aims to draw attention to the (unintended) paternalistic effects that can occur in the transition process. In this respect, the work aims to contribution to a better understanding of the sensitivities of the residents in the transition process, as it makes apparent why ambivalent feelings can arise that can rather lead to dissatisfaction, frustration or overstrain instead of satisfaction about the performed change in lifestyle. Thus, at the end of this work, it shows that one of the biggest challenge of relocation projects is to find a way to deal with the conflict of interest arising from the questions mentioned in the introduction of this book. These are, on the one hand, the claims that the beneficiaries might make and, on the other hand, the offers with which they should be satisfied in order to lead a good life and achieve quality of life.

This leads me to the last topic of this work, i.e. how to leave the field. When doing ethnographic fieldwork, one of the first crucial questions the ethnographer is concerned with is how s/he gains access and enters the field. But how the researcher finally leaves the field usually remains unmentioned. I experienced leaving the field almost as challenging as entering the field. It was a mixture of happiness about returning home and sadness about not knowing when and if I would get the chance to return to the Philippines.

During the nine month of my fieldwork, I became part of the so-called *Jasper-Family*. In contrast to the other *family members*, I only moved temporarily to the housing project. A reason why I was the only resident who did not undergo the Exodus: the Ritual of Transfer. As my neighbors knew that I will only stay for a while, they commonly asked me *kanus-a molakaw man ka?* – meaning, ‘when do you leave?’. Towards the end of the fieldwork, the question turned into *Kanus-a mobalik man ka?* – meaning, ‘when are you coming back?’. I usually answered the question with *puhon!* – meaning ‘sometime in the future’. The question about my departure was usually connected with a concern about what I will do with my stuff like the sleeping sofa, the cabinet, the refrigerator or the electric oven. While some of my neighbors

already announced their interest, others told me to give it to certain people in the community. To avoid disputes and resentments among the neighbors, I left these things in the model house and wrote a letter to the BEC-leaders announcing that they are a gift for the benefit of the whole community.

As I experienced it as the appropriate form of farewell, I organized two official farewell parties together with my research assistants. One, in the dumpsite settlement in Umapad, and one, in the housing project. Both parties were heart breaking. The members of the respective BECs had prepared dance performances, farewell speeches and small gifts, and I gave snacks and drinks in return. But the celebrations were far from over as there were two more informal farewell parties. One, organized by the youths and one by the *Family Group* (FG) that held a Bible Sharing in my house in the first week of my stay in the housing project. The FG-members had prepared everything for a joyful *videoke-night* in the model house without me knowing about it. The night before I left, they came one by one. They brought rice, salads and *lechon manok* (grilled chicken) as well as soft drinks for everyone. When they had finally organized a TV, a sound system and a DVD player, the party started. We celebrated almost until midnight, so that neighbors who did not feel invited complained about the noise disturbance.

This last event in the model house somehow sealed my membership in the *Jasper Family* and made me *sing videoke* for the first time in my life. Since I left the housing project, the model house became a memento of my fieldwork and a guardian of numerous life stories and dreams, especially those of my research assistants and me. While in the meantime all three of my assistants have managed to make their dreams come true, it is now my turn.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE (INTERVIEW GUIDELINE)

Interviewer: _____

Place, Date: _____

Translator: _____

Duration: _____

Part A – Respondent’s Background Characteristics

1. Respondent’s sex: Male [] Female [] Bayud [] Tomboy []
2. Are you married/ in a relationship?
3. Do you have children? If so, how many and how old are they?
4. Who is living with you in the house (who is the BEC Member in your household)?
5. Where did you grow up? How far is it away from here (km/miles)?
6. How many times did you already move in your life? Please, shortly describe the places/way of living you lived in before.
7. What are your closest relationships?
 - a. Parents
 - b. Siblings
 - c. Spouse
 - d. Children
 - e. Friends
 - f. Neighbors
 - g. Cousin
 - h. Nephew/Niece
 - i. Co-Workers
 - j. Others _____
8. What is your highest level of education?
9. What is your occupation? How do you make a living?
10. What makes you the person you are?
 - a. your occupation
 - b. the place you live in
 - c. your language
 - d. your family (parents/siblings/child)
 - e. your body
 - f. your hair
 - g. the way you dress

- h. your nationality
- i. your culture
- j. your personality (describe)
- k. the things you do (describe)
- l. other (describe)

11. Is your family part of you? (explain)
12. How old are you now?
13. Does age matter to you?
14. How do you feel about aging?
15. How important is your body to you?
16. Is there a part of your body you like most? (hair, hands, feet, nose, skin color,...)
17. Does your body say something about you personally?
18. How much do you care about fashion, your styling?
19. If you could change your body, what would you change? Why?
20. Does your hair say something about you personally?
21. Do your clothes say something about you personally?
22. When you leave your house do you care about your dress?
23. What do you wear when you go to
 - a. school
 - b. work
 - c. a meeting in Jasper
 - d. a meeting outside Jasper
 - e. church
 - f. fiesta
 - g. other _____
24. When you are at home, do you care about the way you dress? What do you wear?
25. Do you like to dress up? Why? How do you feel being dressed up?
26. Do you think others see you the way you do?
27. How long do you live in Jasper-Ville?
28. How do you feel about the way you live?
29. Can you describe/Please describe your live in Jasper-Ville
 - a. where do you live in Jasper-Ville?
 - b. how does your house look like?
 - a. where do you eat,
 - b. sleep
 - c. furniture/electronic supplies
 - c. how did you design /change your house since you moved in?

- d. do you have an altar? what is part of it? -> where is it placed in the house?
- e. do you have pictures, certificates, etc. on your walls? where?
- f. where do you spend most of your time?
- g. do you have electricity? If not, why?
- h. where do you get your water?
- i. what do you use for storing the water?
- j. how do you cook? (inside/outside; gas/fire;...)
- k. who are the people you spend most of your time with?
- l. do you sometimes spend time all alone?
- m. do you sometimes spend time in a shopping mall?

30. How do you feel about living in Jasper-Ville?

- a. what do you like about living in Jasper-Ville?
- b. is there something you don't like about living here?
- c. did your feelings change about living here since you moved in, why?
- d. do you miss things in Jasper-Ville compared to the place where you lived before?
- e. do you spend more time inside or outside the Community? Why?

31. Do you think/consider the community as clean or dirty? Please explain why!

32. Do you feel at home in your house?

33. Do you feel secure in Jasper-Ville?

34. Are there things you are afraid of?

35. Are there people/groups of people you feel afraid of?

36. How do you feel when you are outside Jasper-Ville like outside the gate, in Soong or Saak)?

37. What do you do in your free time, to relax or to have fun?

38. Do you do any sports?

39. Do you sing videoke?

- a. If yes, what do you like about it
- b. If not, what don't you like about it?

40. When do you sing videoke?

- a. whenever you like
- b. only on special occasions (like...)
- c. other _____

41. Where do you sing videoke?

- a. at home
- b. at friends place
- c. at neighbors place
- d. other _____

42. Can you describe your feelings while singing?
43. Do you think videoke should be played loud or low? Why?
44. What is your favorite song?
45. Do you have relatives living in Jasper-Ville? Who is it and where do they live?
46. How do you feel about the people living in Jasper-Ville?
47. Do you sometimes go back to the community/place/your house where you lived before?
Regularly or just for special occasions?
48. How do you feel about the place where you lived before? Can you describe it?
49. What were the most life-changing events in your life?
50. Do you consider yourself as being rich or poor? What does that mean to you?
51. What does being rich mean to you?
52. If you see a person on the street, can you tell if he is poor or rich? How?
53. Who do you ask for help in the following cases:

Cleaning dishes	Repair work in/at the house
Fetching water	Lending money
Washing clothes	Finding a job
Buying in Coop	Borrowing house supplies
Buying food outside Jasper	Despair
Fire	You need someone to talk to
Sickness	Cutting your hair
Accident	Manicure/Pedicure
Hospitalization	Picking lice
Preparing a fiesta	Hilot
Taking care of your children	

(Husband, Wife, Live-in-Partner, Parents (sex), Child (rank/sex), Friend (sex), Neighbor (sex), Foreigner, Priest, other)

Estimation questions

The following question involves the use of the “ladder diagram”. Show the respondent the diagram and tell them that the first step represents the “worst” situation and the last step, the “best”. Then ask them where on the ladder they are today. Then ask them where on the ladder they were 10 years ago. Place a “T” under the box representing the response for today and a “P” under the box representing the past.

1. Income

[1] You have no income whatsoever and don't have enough money to buy food or pay for the amortization. You are not able to save money.

[15] You are rich. You have enough money to buy whatever you want or need and to save money.

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8] [9] [10] [11] [12] [13] [14] [15]

2. Working opportunities

[1] There are little or no job opportunities for you.

Because of _____

(education, skills, no money to apply/for investigation, distance to..., ...)

[15] There are so many job opportunities, because it is very easy to find a job for you.

Because of _____

(education, skills, need for manpower, ...)

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8] [9] [10] [11] [12] [13] [14] [15]

Comment _____

3. Living Conditions and needs

[1] Your living conditions are still poor/simple as you cannot meet your needs. (Can you define your needs.)

[15] Your living condition are luxury/comfortable. Your needs are completely full filled and you are able to improve the condition if something is missing.

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8] [9] [10] [11] [12] [13] [14] [15]

Comment _____

(Why/improvements/change for the worse)

4. Contentment

[1] You are not contented /not satisfied with your living conditions because they haven't improved at all.

[15] You are completely contented / satisfied with your living conditions because you now have everything you where longing for.

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8] [9] [10] [11] [12] [13] [14] [15]

Comment

pro _____

contra _____

5. Perceived Safety inside the house

[1] You are constantly afraid inside your house as there is no means of protection.

[15] You feel very secure outside your house because there is a lot of means of protection.

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8] [9] [10] [11] [12] [13] [14] [15]

Means of protection: _____

6. Perceived Safety outside the house

[1] You are constantly afraid within the community because you don't know your neighbors and therefore you don't trust them. There is no one who would help you in case something would happen.

[15] You feel very secure inside the community because you know all your neighbors and there is now one who will harm you. Everyone would help you if something would happen.

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8] [9] [10] [11] [12] [13] [14] [15]

7. Cleanliness in the community

[1] The community is dirty because garbage is scattered everywhere. You don't feel comfortable in the community because everyone litters.

[15] The community is very clean, no garbage is lying around because no one litters inside the community.

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8] [9] [10] [11] [12] [13] [14] [15]

What do you wish to happen within the next 10 years? For you? For your children?

Salamat kaayo!

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INTERVIEWS

- Ate Belen (December 2nd, 2011; duration 3h38).
Chesa (November 15th, 2011; duration 2h49).
Ate Clara (November 29th, 2011; duration 4h23).
Nanay Corazon (November 8th, 2011, duration 3h31).
Ate Hilda (December 16th, 2011; duration 3h43).
Ate Janis (December 8th, 2011; duration 4h38).
Jemma (July 16th, 2011; duration 1h57).
Ate Jonell (December 21st, 2011; duration 3h56).
Kuya Kent (November 15th, 2011; duration 2h57).
Ate Lani (December 20th, 2011; duration 3h59).
Ate Leticia (November 10th, 2011; duration 3h15).
Ate Lorna (November 15th, 2011; duration 4h30).
Malaya (November 13th, 2011; duration 3h17).
Marissa (November 11th, 2011; duration 2h57).
Regina (November 28th, 2011; duration 3h41).
Vito (December 6th, 2011; duration 3h18).