



Master's Thesis

# **DISPOSAL PRACTICES, WASTE GEOGRAPHIES, AND UPCYCLING:** Solid Waste Management in Cebu

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**DATE: AUGUST 15, 2018**

**CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY: SUSTAINABLE CITIZENSHIP**

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**COVER** Photo of Tapul dumpsite in Talisay City, Cebu, the Philippines, made by the author on April 14, 2018.



# **Disposal Practices, Waste Geographies, and Upcycling: Solid Waste Management in Cebu**

## **Abstract**

On the basis of a qualitative research design, this thesis is concerned with how narratives of modernization affect the ways of people perceiving and managing solid waste in Metro Cebu, the Philippines. Following the transformation of the meanings of waste, I analyze how waste becomes disposed and dispersed over the urban geography of Metro Cebu as well as how initiatives intend to restructure people's habits by the ritualization of waste practices. Building on ideas of modernization and citizenship, I argue that the current situation of waste relates to how people try to maintain cleanliness and avoid defilement by performances of being "good citizens". Furthermore, people's everyday experiences reveal how environmental inequalities relate to social inequalities.

**Keywords:** *anthropology, Cebu, citizenship, cleanliness, dirtiness, modernization, Philippines, waste advocacy, waste management*



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# Acknowledgements

Utrecht, August 15, 2018

The realization of this thesis could only have been accomplished thanks to a great number of people. Thanks to an incredible complex of entangled social relationships, I have been able to write exactly what I have written. And perhaps paradoxically, also thanks to the material existence of waste, I was able to do what I have done.

First and foremost, I want to thank the people I met in the three months I spent in Cebu. *Daghang salamat* for the time we spent, the stories we have shared, but also *daghang salamat* for your hospitality, your generosity, the Bisaya you have taught me, the songs we sang, and how you have showed all sorts of insights about your lives. I have learnt a lot by listening to your stories and being part of everyday life. I will not forget you and I will always cherish these memories in my heart.

A few people I would like to thank in particular. Melanie Uy, for providing me support from the beginning and during the entire process of writing this thesis, as well as for posing critical and insightful questions; Myfel Paluga and Aya Ragragio, for helping out to look for possibilities to conduct my research in Mindanao, sharing with me vivid stories and for the brainstorm sessions; Tata and Lourdes, for the hours we talked, laughed and ate, and moreover, for your friendship; Franco and Onyot, for opening up Fablab for me so I could give my presentation and for making it a fantastic evening; Franco, Mushu and Ephraim, for all the times you clarified things to me as well as for your inspiring comments; and Charles and Adrian, for your kindness and willingness to provide your help to me. Janus, I cannot thank you enough for a wide range of things, from navigating me through the city, sharing your experiences, to your ceaseless help in making my daily life easier. I owe a debt of gratitude to my supervisor Gijs Cremers, who always showed his enthusiasm and support in what I was doing and whose useful feedback and suggestions guided me throughout the entire research process. Thank you. And of course, thanks beyond words go out to my parents for their willingness to put up with all my talk about waste in all its forms, but moreover, their unconditional love and support.

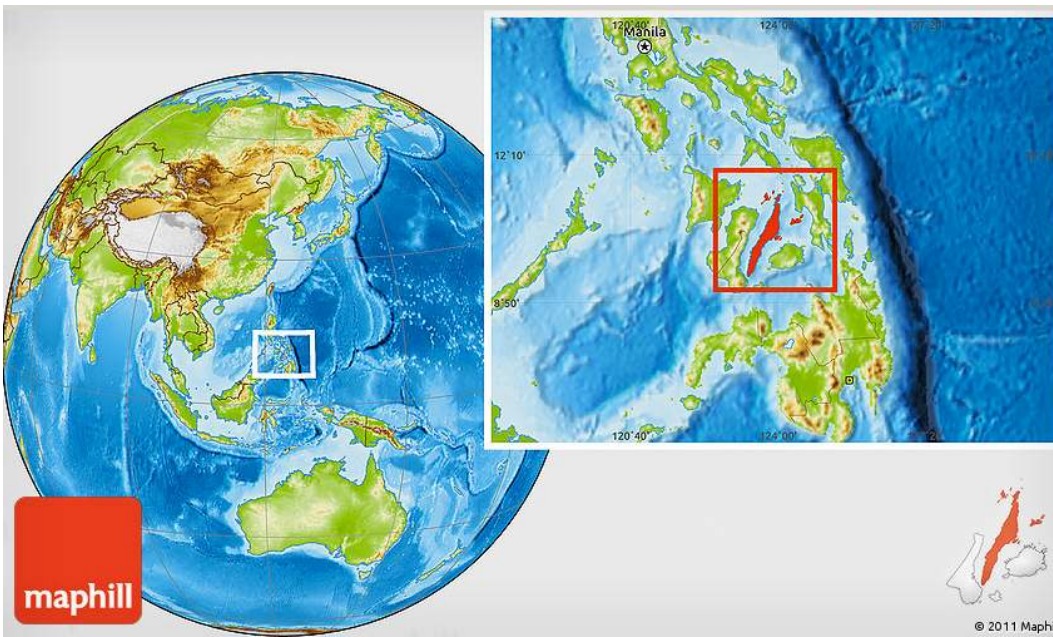
## Glossary and Acronyms

It should be noted that the Bisayan words are written in the way that I have encountered them, since Bisaya does not employ a standard orthography (Endriga 2010:8).

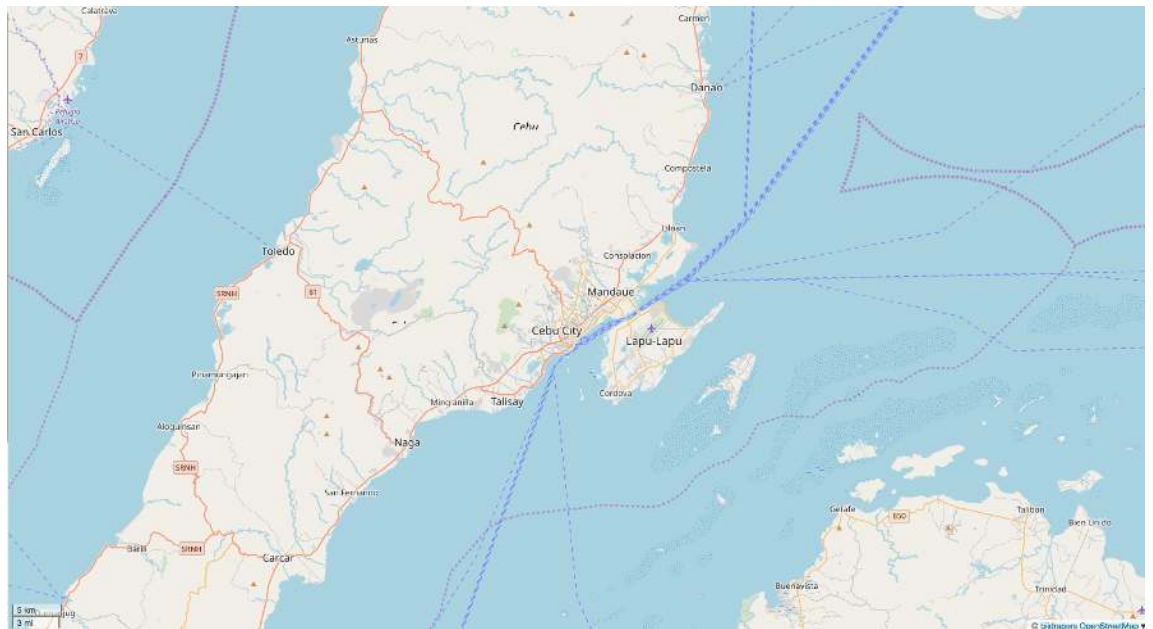
<i>Ayo ayo</i>	a way to call for attention when one is in front of someone's door (Bisaya)
<i>Bahala na</i>	"God's willing" or "leave it to God" (Tagalog)
<i>Bakya</i>	literally wooden clogs, but used as "poor taste". Borrowed from Hokkien 木屐 (bák-kiah), meaning wooden clogs (Tagalog)
<i>Barangay</i>	lowest form of government administration
<i>Barangay captain</i>	head of the <i>barangay</i>
Barbecue	all sorts of different pieces of meat from either chickens or pigs, grilled in a red, sweet sauce
<i>Basura</i>	garbage (Tagalog); derives from Spanish
Bisaya	main language spoken in Cebu; is often interchangeably used with Cebuano
<i>Carinderia</i>	local eatery (Tagalog)
Cebuano	main dialect spoken in Cebu; is often interchangeably used with Bisaya
CENRO	City Environment and Natural Resources Office
CCENRO	Cebu City Environment and Natural Resources Office
<i>Chismis</i>	gossip (Tagalog); derives from Spanish <i>chismes</i>
CO	City Ordinance
C.R.	abbreviation for comfort room, euphemism for toilet or bathroom
DENR	Department of Environment and Natural Resources
<i>Dili malata</i>	non-biodegradable waste (Bisaya)
Dumpsite	place where garbage is dumped without any protection, owned by private companies
EMB	Environmental Management Bureau
<i>Habal habal</i>	motor taxi (Tagalog); the singular use of <i>habal</i> refers to the posture of copulating pigs, so the double use jokingly symbolizes the posture of the motor taxi driver and passenger
<i>Hinlo</i>	cleanliness, neatness, and tidiness with respect to personal hygiene and appearance (Bisaya)
<i>Hiya</i>	shame or embarrassment that one feels when his or her self-esteem is affected; losing face (Tagalog)
<i>Jeepney</i>	mode of public transportation; upcycled U.S. military jeeps from World War II
<i>Kanang</i>	"like", used as expletive (Bisaya)
<i>Kinaiyahan</i>	nature or "a state/being that belongs to him/her" (Bisaya)
Landfill	a sanitary use of a place where garbage gets dumped for a determined period, the ground protected with certain measurements so that the ground does not get affected by the garbage, and a plan that is made to rehabilitate the terrain after the determined period, terrain landfill owned by the government
LGU	Local Government Unit

<i>Maikog</i>	a feeling of being restrained in acting in a certain way due to the potential shame one would feel (Bisaya)
<i>Malata</i>	biodegradable waste (Bisaya)
<i>Mano</i>	gesture of people to greet an elder person by bringing the hand of the elder person towards their foreheads while bowing slightly (Tagalog and Bisaya)
<i>Mestizo</i>	a person who is believed to be from “mixed descent”; derives from Spanish
<i>Nipa</i>	the material from a palm tree of which many thatches of houses are made of
Nose bleeding	used as an expression when one is conscious about their English proficiency; typically when other Filipinos are around
<i>Pakikisama</i>	getting along in harmony (Tagalog)
PENRO	Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office
<i>Promdi</i>	a derogatory term to speak about people who are perceived as “failed elite”. It is a Taglish abbreviation for <i>promdi probinsya</i> (from the province).
<i>Purok</i>	smallest political subdivision of a <i>barangay</i> (like a city ward) and led by the <i>barangay</i>
<i>Puso</i>	hanging rice, wrapped in coconut leaves, originally from Cebu (Bisaya)
<i>Sagbot</i>	wild plants, dust and waste on the floor inside the house (Bisaya)
<i>Sari-sari</i> store	a neighborhood sundry store; <i>sari-sari</i> is Tagalog for sundry
<i>Sitio</i>	see <i>purok</i>
<i>Sugbu</i>	Bisayan or “old” name for Cebu
Tagalog	language that is mainly spoken by people from and around Manila; in its standardized form it is baptized as Filipino or Pilipino and used as national language alongside English
Taglish	Filipino language mingled with English
<i>Tisoy</i>	Taglish for beautiful, deriving from the Spanish word <i>mestizo</i>
<i>Uwaw/ulaw</i>	a certain self-effacing humbleness towards the other person (Bisaya)
<i>Utang na loob</i>	“a debt of one’s inner self”, embodying the notion of that a “self” is indebted to reciprocally pay back the favor to the “self” who initiated the favor (Tagalog)

# Maps

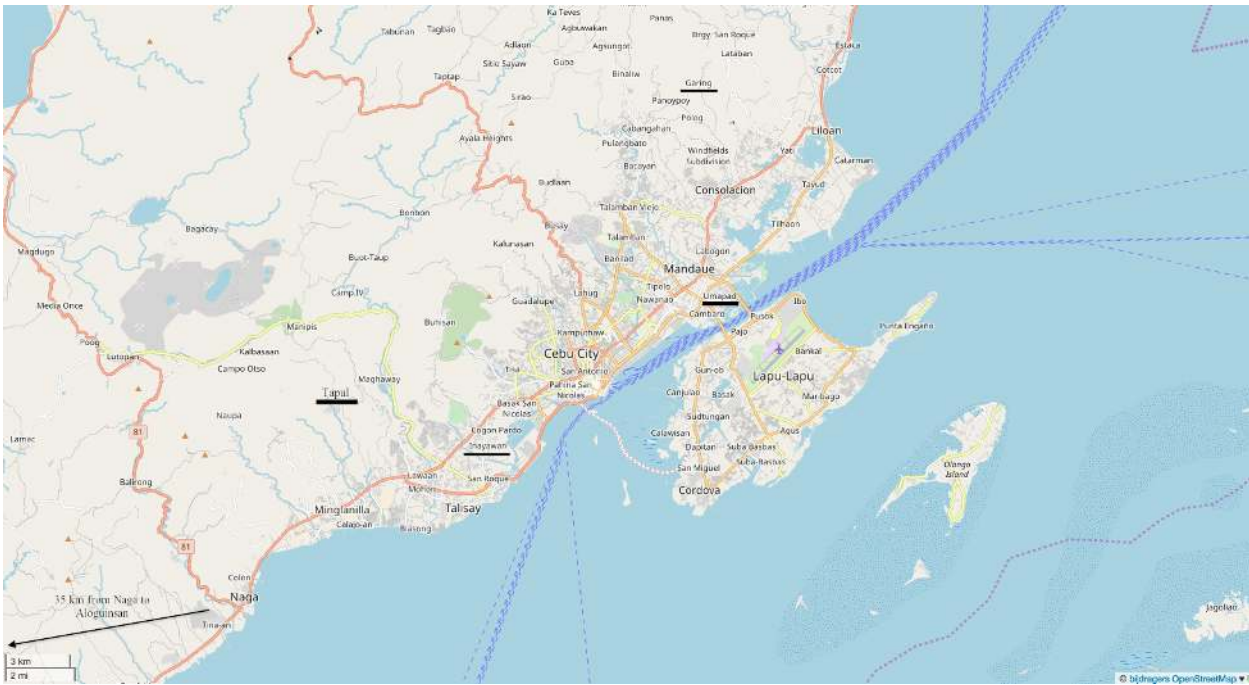


**FIGURE 1:** Map of the Philippines on the left and Cebu province (Region VII) in red on the right. Source: Maphill 2011.



**FIGURE 2:** Map of Metro Cebu, consisting of Cebu City, Lapu Lapu City, Mandaue City, Talisay City, Danao, Carcar, Naga, Minglanilla, Consolacion, Liloan, San Fernando, Cordova and Compostela. Source: OpenStreetMap.





**FIGURE 3:** Map of Cebu City, Lapu Lapu City, Mandaue City, and Talisay City. The underlined names are the places where the dumpsites are located. Source: OpenStreetMap.



**FIGURE 4:** Lookout over parts from Cebu City, Mandaue City and Lapu Lapu City. The picture is taken along Cebu Transcentral Highway, *barangay* Busay, Cebu City.

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## Introduction



It is April 20, the weather is becoming warmer every day and I am coming home from a day of fieldwork. After a day of interviewing a government official from the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office, I am full of new questions and thoughts. While pondering about the answers I was given about why there are no trash bins in Metro Cebu, the Philippines, I go to Facebook. My finger scrolls through the content. My finger suddenly stops when I see a picture of a man. With his head wrapped in a yellow cloth, the red gloved hands hold a stick down a drain. Next to him is a pile of plastic bottles. Published by Cebu City's mayor Tomas R. Osmeña, the caption tells:

Kons. Guardo is in the process of clearing up the drainage of trash, but there would be no trash to clean up if no one threw it there to begin with. The City Government cannot be everywhere all the time. It is up to the citizens to discipline themselves. Over the next few months, we will be putting up garbage bins around the streets so people will not have any excuses, but this is still up to the people.



It does not take long, and the post is filled with over 600 comments. People's opinions are diverse and widespread. One of the comments reads: "this begs the question???WHY have trash

bins not been installed a long time ago and timely rubbish collections made? Oh I forgot, it's election time so better do something to look good huh?" Another text begs:

Providing trash bins in the streets is a good way of making the city clean but how about providing new garbage trucks to different barangays? Here in Mambaling we can see garbage dump in a certain place because no garbage collection is done I have seen piles of garbage in some other part of the city not only in our barangay. [...]

A lot of other comments, however, object the responsibility of the government in this aspect, and instead, point to people's lack of discipline: "So to be very frank about it: many people will always find an excuse to justify why they throw trash anywhere. It's either too few or too many trash bins, trucks, etc. This all boils down to discipline and sense of belonging to the community. [...]" While others express a cry for a change how products are presented:

How about the businessmen? Can we also do something to encourage them to change the packagings of their products? Using eco bags alone ending up with a bunch of goodies packed in plastic seems to not fully help this problem. When i buy groceries for example no matter how i try to choose products packed in cardboard boxes, when i open the box the product is still packed in transparent plastic. [...]<sup>1</sup>

Metro Cebu is not a unique place in the Philippines that battles with the issue of how waste should be managed. This April, the Philippines made international headlines in the news when president Rodrigo Duterte announced to "shut down" the island Boracay for a year, an island with the highest influx of tourists in the country, that should have become a "cesspool" due to a neglected waste management. It undoubtedly drew the attention on how waste affects the environment. Also in March, the Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources Roy A. Cimatu pressured informal settlers (colloquially known as squatters) that reside along the coast in the similarly tourist destination El Nido, Palawan, to be relocated, claiming that they are responsible for disposing their waste, including their excrements, directly in the sea:

"Holy week is almost upon us. They should reflect on the environmental consequences of their actions. They should be more conscientious about the waste they produce," the secretary said. "Firstly, they should not throw waste directly into the sea. They should segregate and dispose of their waste responsibly. Do the right thing," he added.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/tommyrosmena/posts/kons-guardo-is-in-the/2062573373782846/>, published on April 20, 2018. Accessed on August 14, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/notes/department-of-environment-and-natural-resources-dentr/dentr-seeks-relocation-of-informal-settlers-in-el-nido-coasts/1566330593484564/?\\_rdc=1&\\_rdr](https://www.facebook.com/notes/department-of-environment-and-natural-resources-dentr/dentr-seeks-relocation-of-informal-settlers-in-el-nido-coasts/1566330593484564/?_rdc=1&_rdr), published on March 26, 2018. Accessed on August 14, 2018.



What is remarkable about all of these events is how they depict the local inhabitants as undisciplined individuals that are threatening the social environmental order by their inability of self-control and holding on to their waste (Hawkins 2001). Instead, it is expected that they embrace the new set of rituals involved with waste disposal, including segregation. Currently in Metro Cebu, waste is found in many other places outside of the dumpsite, affecting the streetscapes. Drainage systems become clogged due to the amounts of litter, regularly leading to floods during rains. Since the metropolis is situated at the foot of the mountains and next to the sea, the floods affect the literal and figurative downtown area the most. Moreover, certain dumping practices affect air quality and water quality negatively as well as they have an impact on the health of humans and nonhuman organisms (Ma and Hipel 2016).

Of course waste is not a problem that is limited to the Philippines. The last few decades images of the Great Pacific garbage patch or metaphorically known as the “plastic soup” have become very prevalent when it comes to raising awareness about global issues that relate to the presence of waste (Hawkins 2001). While they come along with images such as melting ice caps, rising water levels, deforested areas and the loss in biodiversity (Tsing 2015), issues that show the aesthetic and environmental consequences of particularly plastic waste appear to raise strong feelings about anthropogenic impacts by many of us, thereupon guilt and moral disdain by some (Gabrys, Hawkins and Michael 2013; Hawkins 2001). The visibility of the proliferation of waste poses us questions about how waste in such amounts ended up in the sea in the first place, underlining how it has become a “matter out of place”, resulting in the demand of stabilizing “order”, often expressed in the demand of a change in disposal practices (Hawkins 2001). Today our everyday relations with waste are gradually transforming with increasingly more countries having put up waste schemes high on the political agenda, consisting of prevention, reuse and preparation for reuse, recycle, recovery, and disposal (Ma and Hipel 2016). The ways we manage waste contain economic, geographic, political, social and technical dimensions (Davies 2008; O’Brien 1999). Waste management is therefore everything but a simple process. But seeing that the waste management is shifting from something that the government handles toward the partial responsibility of “citizens”, more and more people are becoming aware of the presence of waste. The request for segregating waste involves a new set of daily rituals. At the same time, many people have their unique ways of disposing waste, whether it be by throwing it on the streets, incinerating it, or by feeding their pigs with their leftovers. How does this different range of disposal practices affect the city? And how does the city affect their disposal practices? Moreover, in regard to the cases in Boracay, Palawan and Cebu, what comes to the fore is that specific groups of people are being seen as responsible for its issues. Why are these groups regarded as responsible for waste management issues? And how are people contesting each other, trying to change each other’s disposal practices?

## **Introduction to Study and Research Topics**

This thesis is concerned with the everyday experiences and understandings of managing solid waste in Metro Cebu. In this ethnographic study, I aim to develop an understanding about how narratives of modernization affect people's perceptions and negotiations of meanings of solid waste in Metro Cebu. Literature on solid waste management in Metro Cebu comes only from development planning and environmental sciences (see Premakumara et al. 2014; Ancog, Archival and Rebanco 2012). Wex (2007), however, points out that some of these approaches do not take local values or perspectives into account in order to make sustainable education programs and waste management effective. What is considered waste depends on the value people attach to it. These values differ across people, likewise about the ideas where waste belongs and what is considered as a proper "life cycle" of waste. In other words, people will have different attitudes towards what is considered waste and how it should be managed. An anthropological approach therefore contributes to the existing literature by the way it includes how waste is actually experienced and understood in everyday life (see also Drackner 2005). Moreover, most ethnographic accounts on experiences on solid waste are often limited to people who work on the dumpsite (e.g., Millar 2014; Whitson 2011), missing a holistic approach that takes other city dwellers, waste advocates and the government into account as well. Applying this approach, I aim to unveil geographic, economic, political and social capacities and agendas that possibly interrupt the attempt of solving waste management issues.

But what is waste?<sup>3</sup> Waste can be understood as the perception that has come to consider a material – whether it be solid, liquid, or gas – as "surplus" (Gille 2010; Boyle 2002). Waste can be a byproduct or a remainder (Dillon 2010), and with this status it is denied as a material with value (Dillon 2010; Reno 2014; Whitson 2011). Similarly to dirt, waste is therefore often considered as a transgressed matter or a matter "out of place" (Cresswell 1996; Douglas 1966). Moore (2012), however, demonstrates the ambiguity of waste, since it can be approached in a variety of ways: as hazard, object of management, commodity, resource, archive, filth, fetish, risk, disorder, matter out of place, governable object, abject, and actant. This array of concepts does not only stress the subjectivity of waste, but also shows how waste is marked by spatiotemporal dimensions and how "wasting" is a social process of value-transformation (O'Brien 1999). Waste is therefore not a terminus, since in processes such as recycling or energy recovery the value is transformed. Moreover, since waste can "circulate and deform, wastes mix

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<sup>3</sup> To my knowledge, analogous, English terms for waste include debris, detritus, dreck, dregs, dross, excess, garbage, hogwash, junk, leavings, leftovers, litter, offal, offscourings, refuse, rubbish, rubble, scraps, slop, sweepings, swill, and trash. In this thesis, my preference for the term waste is based on its widespread use and its general understanding of "unwanted or unusable material, substances, or by-product" (Oxford Dictionary of English 2013). In my opinion, it thus encompasses the many sorts of waste, while it beholds the subjectivity of the term, as well as it does not need to be considered as the final stage of a material, substance, or by-product. Last but not least, most scientific literature on this topic similarly employs the term waste.

with people and places, with which they mutually transform or become together” (Reno 2015: 561), although these entanglements can be extended to the social worlds of many nonhuman organisms as well (see Gabrys 2013).

In order to understand how networks and relations are formed, I draw on Ingold’s ontological notion of meshwork (2011). The meshwork moves beyond seeing things as entities and focuses instead on seeing the relations of components. In fact, all becomings are in some way or the other coexisting with other becomings and influencing each others’ lifeworlds.<sup>4</sup> Stengers illustrates this by the orchid and the wasp that “presuppose the existence of each other to produce themselves” (2007:14), while Ingold exemplifies this by how a fish is indelible from water as it will be dead otherwise (2011:92–93). Ingold additionally stresses that the environment only exists in relation to the being whose environment it is. In other words, we should see the environment as an open-ended meshwork in which all components are actors in continuous development, and that the environment changes when you switch to another protagonist’s perspective (Tsing 2015; Ingold 2011). Using the notion of the meshwork, therefore, helps us to understand the plurality and complexity of waste and its entanglements. That is, tracing the entanglements in the meshwork of waste shows us how meanings of waste are transformed like autonomous melodies in a polyphonic manner while not necessarily being in the same place (Tsing 2015:23–25).

One of the core entanglements in this thesis is how perceptions of waste build on the myth of processes of modernization. On the one hand, narratives of modernization present ideas of that certain places have passed certain periods of linear “progress”. On the other hand, narratives of modernization give “form to an understanding of the world, providing a set of categories and premises that continue to shape people’s experiences and interpretations of their lives” (Ferguson 1999:13–14). In other words, these narratives bring expectations of modernity. These expectations of modernity imagine the city as clean, ordered and rational, while exactly waste shows the paradox of modernity, due to its dependence “on a production system (capitalism) based on planned obsolescence and ever-expanding consumerism” in which waste runs riot (Moore 2009:428).

While waste has been causing nuisances at least since the existence of industrialized environments (O’Brien 2013), the idea that waste is something that needs to be managed and governed only stems from the last century (Gille 2010; Gregson and Crang 2015; Hawkins 2001), coincidental with the emergence of the use of petroleum. Due to its capacity to make longer distances of movement possible in its use for transporting goods, most people’s everyday lives in the world are dependent on this substance, as well as its presence in components that

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<sup>4</sup> As opposed to the static, complete, unchanging term “being”, I have appropriated the term “becoming” from Ingold (2011). The continuous change of everything could be understood by a metaphor of language: “it endures a continuous process of becoming” (Vološinov 1973:81 *in* Ingold 2011:161).

contain plastic (Mitchell 2009; Marriot and Minio-Paluello 2013). In combination with expectations of modernity, petroleum has been a catalyst to today's waste issues. In other words, it has been a catalyst that has transformed the meanings of waste today, creating new entanglements from disposal practices to upcycling.

### **The Setting**

From February till May 2018, I have conducted 13 weeks of fieldwork in Cebu City, the Philippines. With an estimated population of almost 105 million inhabitants (World Bank 2017), the Philippine archipelago consists of over 2000 inhabited islands, but from North to South it can be roughly divided into three major island groups: Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao (Jose and Cruz 1999). Cebu province belongs to the regional subdivision of the Central Visayas. The official languages of the Philippines are Filipino and English, but in total 78 languages and 500 dialects are identified. In Metro Cebu, Bisaya is the major language, of which Cebuano is the vernacular (Abinales and Amoroso 2005).

The Philippines has gone through a turbulent, colonial history. From 1565 to 1898, Spanish conquistadores baptized the South-East Asian islands "las Felipinas" after prince Philip II of Spain. With an interval of the Spanish-American War, the treaty of Paris in 1898 made an end to the Spanish era and the USA took over the control over the Philippines. During the Second World War, however, the Japanese occupied the Philippines from 1942 to 1945. After the war, the Treaty of Manila in 1946 enacted the independence of the Republic of the Philippines (Abinales and Amoroso 2005). The city of my interest as well as the surrounding cities – Cebu City, Lapu Lapu City, Mandaue City and Talisay City – are locally administered by the so-called Local Government Units or LGUs. These LGUs are clustered into *barangays* (city wards), which is the smallest administrative division. Both the LGUs and *barangays* have their legislatures and own elected executives, the mayor and the *barangay* captain respectively. *Barangays* can thereupon be divided into *sitios* and *puroks*, that are led by *barangay* councillors.

As the biggest city with over 923,000 inhabitants (Philippine Statistics Authority 2016), Cebu City is part of Metro Cebu, a metropolis consisting of seven cities and five municipalities (see Table 1). In order to avoid the fetishization of a place and approaching a city as static without fluxes from outside the city borders, I have widened my scope to some of the neighboring cities of Cebu City to put my observations in a wider context as a way of "polymorphous engagement" (Gusterson 1997:116) as well as viewing the urban as process (Low 1996). I have therefore included experiences, conversations, and interviews from not only Cebu City, but also from the surrounding cities, namely Mandaue City on the North, Lapu Lapu City that is on the East across the Mactan Strait and Talisay City on the South. The metropolis is located on the island of Cebu and it is the capital of the province of Cebu.

City	Inhabitants
Cebu City	923,000
Lapu Lapu City	408,000
Mandaue City	363,000
Talisay City	227,645
Danao	136,471
Carcar	119,664
Naga	115,750
Municipalities	Inhabitants
Minglanilla	132,135
Consolacion	131,528
Liloan	118,753
San Fernando	66,280
Cordova	59,712
Compostela	47,898

**TABLE 1:** Based on the 2015 census, number of inhabitants of the cities and municipalities that are part of Metro Cebu, listed in descending order. **Source:** Philippine Statistics Authority 2016.

My choice for Cebu City and the Philippines requires some explanation. The topic of my research proposal was fairly different than the eventual topic of waste management. I originally had intended to conduct a research on naturalcultural encounters in a certain village on the island of Mindanao, South Philippines (see Haraway 2003; Faier and Rofel 2014), but due to the uncertainty of safety in that area I altered the fieldwork site. This is a part of fieldwork: fieldwork and the writing of an ethnography requires the continuous process of revising and amending the research design as well as adapting methods at specific moments and situations that the researcher will find her or himself in (O’Reilly 2005). With my flight ticket already booked, I decided to look at how entanglements between stray dogs, stray cats and humans were played out in Cebu City. After a few weeks, I decided to scrutinize with the stray dogs and cats: likewise, I started to trace where humans had left their remnants, although I became rather fascinated by the *why* these remnants were left (see Figure 5). In other words, at these sites, I discovered what Tsing calls margins: “sites [...] where discrepant kinds of meaning-making converge” (1994:279). During my first month of exploration, it also turned out that Cebu City’s geography influenced waste issues. Situated at the foot of a mountain range on the West and the

Cebu Strait at the East, several people explained me that waste particularly proliferated at the lower situated neighborhoods. Prompted by these comments in combination with people’s stories about waste management in other Philippine touristic places, such as Siargao, El Nido and Boracay, I wondered if experiences of waste were geographically equally distributed and how waste was experienced in a city where most people’s incomes are not dependent on the influx of tourists.

### Methodology

In furtherance of answering the research question and its corresponding subsidiary questions, I



have used a qualitative research design for this case study. One of the main methods I have used is participant observation. Participant observation implies the oxymoronic combination of observation and participation in the actors' daily activities (Rabinow 2007:79). Examples of participant observation are hanging out, actively listening, and attending events from a personal to a larger scale as well as informal conversations with inhabitants in Metro Cebu, government officials and waste advocates. The application of this method allowed me to recognize the diversity of everyday experiences people in Metro Cebu have, the variety of meanings that the people in Metro Cebu give to them and how these meanings are interconnected.

Citing DeWalt and DeWalt, "observation is not data unless it is recorded; and your brain is a poor recording device" (2011:157), I have daily written up field notes as detailed as possible. Besides these notes include observations, they also consist of information that resulted from attentively listening, counting, mapping and personal feelings. I have stored all the mentioned data in the same document. I regard all the data I collected as intrinsically overlapping, while they simultaneously reveal the subjective nature of my observations.

In addition, a significant part of the research draws from data collected from informal conversations as well as from semistructured and open interviews. In most occasions, I have had informal conversations and interactions with people. The informal setting has mainly served to understand processes and situations in a broader view. In order to avoid the ventriloquism that anthropology employs in its way that the researcher voices for its participants (Appadurai 1988:20), I have discussed my observations and subsequent interpretations with interlocutors from time to time in order to reflect and question my own biases (and, of course, adapted when observations and interpretations seemed to be awry). Yet, any errors or misinterpretations are on my side. I have had 30 interviews with people that in some way or the other were involved in waste (government officials, people who work on the dumpsite for the government, people who used to work at the dumpsite to scavenge, waste advocates and people who "produce" waste), though I have only recorded the audio from eight of these interviews, that range from 45 minutes to 150 minutes in length. These interviews have served to get more structure, direction and details in order to find answers to the questions that were still unanswered (O'Reilly 2005). Since in the first weeks I was exploring the field, I only started to have interviews after four weeks. I



**FIGURE 5:** Picture of stray cats encountering waste as resource. A site of "discrepant kinds of meaning-making" (Tsing 1994:279).

have purposely waited with the more structured interviews for the end of my fieldwork, but due to the *barangay* elections on May 14, I was unfortunately not able to have some of the desired interviews with *barangay* captains.

In order to encounter the people who live in Metro Cebu, I have used the purposive sample method of “snowball sampling”. I initially started knowing the first people through daily encounters, and later through participating in specific activities. Aside of that, I googled and facebooked “waste Cebu” and contacted some people who were active in waste-related advocacy through that medium. Through these people, I have been introduced to many other people. I carefully considered people whom to interview by attempting to select individuals from different backgrounds and worldviews.

Ethnographic research raises a lot of ethical questions, such as my own role as anthropologist. Toward interlocutors, I have always explained my reasons of being there and made them aware of the possibility that I recorded certain information, which is only the case if they had given me informed consent. I also emphasized interlocutors that they were in any given moment free to stop their participation. Since I have guaranteed interlocutors their anonymity and confidentiality, I insist in upholding their anonymity by using pseudonyms.

Not different than other researchers, my views are inherently biased and my descriptions of other becomings are therefore inevitably put in a “translation machine” that is “ready to chop off excess parts and to hammer those that remain into their proper places” and that are put together “into a unified system of knowledge and practice”, called science (Tsing 2015:217). Despite of this, I nevertheless endeavored to stay as close to the interlocutors’ experiences as possible. Moreover, my role as a solo, young, European/Dutch woman who goes to university, has lived all her life in a city does not only color my views but as well how people in Metro Cebu may have viewed me, negotiated with me and performed and therefore has influenced the outcomes of the research as well.

For most of my interlocutors, Bisaya was their first language, while English was their second or sometimes third. I have conducted my research in English, wherefore I admit that chances of miscommunication have definitely been present. In a few cases, I have sometimes been offered by other surrounding interlocutors that they would interpret the Bisaya. Their help could arguably have both opened up and closed down access to information. By all means, seeing the additional layer of “rustling”, I have been careful for the interpretation of the words translated in my analysis. Apart from that, I have tried to pick up some basic Bisaya. In the process of practising the language, I learnt how some people would use more a mix of Tagalog or English words than others, and how vocabulary even strongly differed among regions. Due to conducting my fieldwork in English, my curiosity was sparked when one-to-one translations of some Bisayan expressions were not available, which allowed me to read between the lines. Indeed, a few of the main concepts I anatomize in this thesis (*hiya*, *maikog*, *ulaw*) have only

caught my attention because of not understanding what was meant in the given contexts (see also Borchgrevink 2003).

In the thesis, I have words left untranslated to either show the influence of the colonial heritage or the mixture of languages. Other words I left untranslated were those that were untranslated by interlocutors themselves or when a one-to-one translation is not possible because of the specific meaning of an expression. Moreover, this way I hope that those who speak Tagalog and Bisaya can judge the terms by themselves.

After my fieldwork I have used the application of Nvivo for an analysis of my collected data. Its use has served as organization, summary and way of discovering connections, patterns and themes of all the information (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011). I have used data triangulation to control on the different sources of information. For academic literature, I have used Anthrosource and Google Scholar, as well as non-academic (semi)material data such as news articles, reports, and the Internet to explore how and what is presented as topical. This way, I hope that my ethnography will be capable of unveiling “how local events and local commentary on them can be linked to a variety of processes unfolding simultaneously on very different scales of time and place” (Moore 1987:731).

### **Outline of the thesis**

This thesis is divided into four chapters, of which every chapter is subdivided into four to five paragraphs. Entangled with both theories and empirical data, the major thread that runs through the thesis follows the transformation of the meanings of waste from being disposed to the dispersion over the urban areas of Metro Cebu, to eventually being “picked up” within the context of upcycling.<sup>5</sup> Coming after Knowles by adopting the vantage point of waste and following a part of its trail, I hope to give an insight into the “co-productions of space, social and human fabrics; entanglements of social lives and objects; and the materials from which objects are made” (2015:232).

While slowly zooming in from the wider Filipino context to Metro Cebu, the first chapter unravels how meanings of cleanliness and dirtiness come to rise in the variety of disposal practices. I suggest the ritualization of waste disposal practices and how it relates to how people continuously perform surrounding notions of dirtiness and cleanliness by pursuing to be “good citizens”. After seeing how waste has ended up in the urban area, chapter two looks at how waste gives meanings to the urban area and how the urban area is giving meaning to waste. With that, I disclose how socio-economic inequalities go accompanied with environmental inequalities. In the third chapter I will describe how both social and governmental initiatives are involved in

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<sup>5</sup> It is not my intention that the transformation of waste is linear nor in this sequence and that the different parts do not contest the different meanings of waste.

advocating different meanings of waste. In that, I analyze the political aspects and consequences of it. In the conclusion I demonstrate how narratives of modernization transform and negotiate meanings of waste in Metro Cebu. I propose that people's relations to waste and consequent acts are not matters of discipline, but rather ways of expressing forms of citizenship.

# 1



## Disposal Practices

It is evening and Vanessa, Carol and I are sitting around the table. We are starting to talk *chismis* (gossip). At one point our attention goes to Gabriel. They tell me that he does not take care of himself. When I ask why they think that, small wrinkles at Carol's nose bridge become apparent when she pulls her nose up, while simultaneously the corners of her mouth go down: "Because he smells bad and he does not wash himself! He does not change his clothes after working. And then he wears these joggings. He is not responsible."

Vanessa joins in: "He says that he does not wash himself to save water." They both burst out laughing. Then Vanessa turns serious: "It is also because he has finished work and that he is tired then. Our parents always tell us that you cannot wash yourself when your body is warm, because the sudden switch to cold water will make you sick."

Then, they explain how they often do not use the shower but with a small vat in the buckets that are besides of the shower instead. Without any irony that can be read from her face, Carol's eyes light up when she calls out: "And it saves water!"<sup>6</sup>

This story illustrates some of the aspects which are important to think with in regard to cleanliness, dirtiness and waste. It raises questions how this seeming contradiction about saving water makes sense. In this chapter, I will first look at how dirt is related to ideas of "wild" and "uncivilized", while being connected to the ground. Secondly, I will show how performances of cleanliness incorporates power relations. Thirdly, I will look at how the moral problematization of waste has led to a transformation of disposal practices, namely a waste segregation system, and how it pertains to ideas of "disciplined citizens". In the fourth section, I argue that those who do not dispose their waste in the way as the waste segregation system demands are as much performing "disciplined citizens" as those who claim to do it "appropriately".

### 1.1 The place-making of dirt in Cebu

Dirt is "a matter out of place", argues anthropologist Mary Douglas (1966:2), emphasizing the importance of looking at the different values that are given to matters in their specific contexts, as well as the subjectivity of dirt by stating that "dirt exists in the eye of the beholder". Looking at the dynamic ideas of dirtiness and pollution in societies, Douglas argues how dirt is an

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<sup>6</sup> Fieldnotes. March 19, 2018.



inevitable result of systems of morality, wherein one orders and classifies matters. Since “dirt offends against order” (Douglas 1966:2), efforts against dirt are ways of organizing an environment. In a case study about cleanliness on Cebu’s neighboring island Bohol, Borchgrevink (2002) scrutinizes the concepts of the Bisayan terms *hinlo* and *sagbot*. He defines *hinlo* as “cleanliness, neatness, and tidiness with respect to personal hygiene and appearance” (Borchgrevink 2002:228-229). It includes tasks such as housekeeping and dishwashing, as well as the maintenance of gardens and public areas. The meaning of *sagbot* encompasses wild plants, dust and waste on the floor inside the house. In pursuance of a *hinlo* environment, people endeavor to get rid of *sagbot*. Borchgrevink (2002) shows how the word reveals how undomesticated nature carries representations such as dangers and disease that needs to be sanitized from this dirt. In the context of a metropolis, however, and particularly one that barely has open, green places, dirt is experienced, too:

It was almost midday and the sun was almost standing at its highest. Scuffing with her slippers through the streets, Eleanor tries to hold the umbrella above both of our heads. “Let’s go to this house”, she tells me. In front of the house, she calls for attention: “*Ayo ayo!*” and ticks with some keys on the metal fence. When Janice appears, Eleanor asks if it is fine if I ask some questions. Turning her head around, she makes her eyes big and smiles. “Let’s go in”, she says. I ask if I have to take my shoes off, but Janice shakes her head. We enter the house through going up the doorstep, I get an apology for the mess, and both Janice and her mother then gesture us to sit down on the seats. As soon as I drop my backpack on the floor, they pick it up and put it on another chair. It was not the first time that my backpack was lifted from the floor: it repeatedly happened when I entered a *carinderia* (local eatery) or someone’s house. But this time it suddenly came down to me that the ground must contain connotations of dirt in some way or the other. Houses built from concrete were always elevated with some foundation, and most houses built from *nipa* (palm tree), too. In the absence of chairs, people would sit squatted, before they would get tired and sit on their bums. And people would never put a bag on the floor. It swiftly all started coming together: the ground is often highly related to ideas of dirtiness.<sup>7</sup>

The association of dirtiness and the ground are in line with humans being significantly different than other animals. Following Darwin’s reasoning, Ingold (2011) contends that humans’ uprightness must have benefited that the freedom of the hands and arms. It led to the idea of hands that are considered superior than feet, with “reason” on top and “nature” on the ground. Technologies such as paved roads, boots and chairs have distanced humans from the ground that consequently contribute in shaping our bodies as well as they drive ideas where the absence of such technologies is considered as a lack of civilization. In Metro Cebu, it is also the ground where one finds an abundance of trash, an amount that exacerbates during heavy rainfalls, especially in the wet season. Indeed, this is when drainage systems are clogged up with trash,

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<sup>7</sup> Fieldnotes. April 26, 2018.

causing floods that flow through the streets carrying trash. Hence, it is on the ground where “wild” and “dirty” forces take over. These forces are regarded as relatively uncontrollable, too: in a study on children’s perceptions of embodied experiences of illnesses in a *purok* close to a dumpsite on the neighboring island Negros, Mitchell (2006) shows how children regard their bodies vulnerable to environmental factors, especially factors related to weather and living in the dirt. As she notices, they go along with perceptions of a lack of control over the environment. This wild, dirty, and uncontrollable ground, then, leaves some people in Metro Cebu with little sense of belonging. In fact, the Bisayan term for nature *kinaiyahan* illustrates that nature does not necessarily belong to humans, since it could be roughly translated as “a state/being that belongs to him/her”.<sup>8</sup> The Tagalog expression “*bahala na*” evinces this perception of being unable to exert control over situations and places; an expression that is often interpreted as “God’s willing” or “leave it to God”.<sup>9</sup> In situations and places where one believes he or she can exert control, however, the pursuance of cleanliness takes place, that inevitably includes eliminating dirt. After all, becoming defiled deliberately does not make sense, but how becoming defiled is understood depends on someone’s lifeworld. In other words, becoming defiled “threatens one’s own and clean self, underpinning of any organization constituted by exclusions and hierarchies” (Kristeva 1982:65). In the next section I will zoom in on how some people in Metro Cebu intend to avoid becoming defiled in relation to meanings of citizenship.

## 1.2 *Hinlo* performances

The anecdote with Vanessa and Carol as well as the story of the ground show that personal hygiene, “appropriate” clothes, and a clean house is regarded as taking care of oneself that often is translated as an indicator of status. According to Mitchell (2006), this so-called hygienic citizenship derives from American colonialism in the Philippines. But as Mitchell also shows, for many people that live in poverty the imposed ideal of “a clean, well-fed, healthy, and disciplined [...] Filipino [...] is materially and socially unattainable” (2006:365). While the material dimension is self-explanatory, the social dimension touches upon many layers. Looking at the Philippines’ colonial history, Rafael (2000) argues how a person’s assets play roles in how one is looked upon in the Philippines. He argues that, for instance, the great significance of one’s genealogical origin may have part of its roots from the Spanish colonization, since the “Filipino historical imagination” narrates that mestizos were the ones that appeared to be more entitled in regard to “economic wealth, political influence, and cultural hegemony” (Rafael 2000:164–165). Perhaps the importance of genealogical importance has also been reinforced with the introduction of surnames in 1849, wherein Spanish governor Narciso Clavería mandated towns

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<sup>8</sup> I would like to thank Mushu for clarifying this point to me.

<sup>9</sup> Nicolas, Sandra, Nonoy and Densong. Conversation. February 24, 2018.

to pick a specific letter from “the Catalogue of Family Names” so that towns only distributed the surnames with this chosen letter among families. This way, one could more or less trace back which hometown one was from by the first letter of the surname (Abinales and Amoroso 2005:91).<sup>10</sup>

Rafael also asserts how one can be judged by their use of language. From the U.S. colonization onwards, English has been associated with access to higher education, as well as it has been the language of instruction in schools, and it is typically used in “elite circles of multinational corporations, the diplomatic corps, the tourist industry, overseas labor recruitment, metropolitan newspapers of record, and the medical and legal professions; it is the chief official language of the legislative, judicial, and other policy-making bodies of the state. And English is, of course, the language of foreign movies, mostly from the United States, which continue to dominate the country's film market” (Rafael 2000:167–168). On the other hand, Tagalog, a language that originally was mainly spoken in and around Manila, was turned into a nationalist project by institutionalizing it as the Philippine *lingua franca* by integrating certain terms from the other languages that are found in the Philippine territory, and it was baptized as the “Filipino” language (Rafael 2000). Several people who spoke Bisaya as their first language, however, explained me that they did not feel “confident” in speaking Tagalog and for that reason they preferred to communicate in English to Filipinos that speak other vernaculars.<sup>11</sup> Many additionally claimed that the number of Filipinos that speak Bisaya as their first language is higher than Tagalog.<sup>12</sup> It is not surprising, then, that the Filipino language has only succeeded to have a translocal reach when it has been mingled with English, also known as Taglish (Rafael 2000).

Furthermore, the way beauty is represented in Filipino popular culture reflects how the tendency is higher to strongly admire a “mingled” Filipino with “foreign influences” (McFerson 2002:13–42), and so does the Taglish word for beauty, *tisoy*, that derives from the Spanish word *mestizo*.<sup>13</sup> So how does this predilection for the *mestizo* comes forth in regard to eliminating dirt? After I asked a person who participates in a waste cleaning initiative if they ever received reactions of people passing by, he told me:

[We are not like that], you know, the traditional garbage collector, the very dirty. You can tell, this is a respectable person, the color of the skin, you know, they're professionally educated. So something, they will react, what happen to this one.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> I would like to thank Ephraim for clarifying this point to me.

<sup>11</sup> Victor. Conversation. February 5, 2018. & Ephraim, Emilio, Nonoy, Omar. Conversation. February 7, 2018.

<sup>12</sup> Ephraim, Emilio, Nonoy, Omar. Conversation. February 7, 2018. & Kerwin. Conversation. March 19, 2018.

<sup>13</sup> I would like to thank Janus for clarifying this point to me.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph. Interview. March 19, 2018.

Similarly in many other Asian countries, the comment on the skin color reveals how a darker color is often associated with ideas of work where one is exposed to the sun, as well as education degree, and even respectability (McFerson 2002:13–42). Many of the people I met made great effort to avoid tanning, trying to achieve that by using umbrellas, parasols, covering bare skins with clothes, whitening soaps, and mostly by avoiding exposure to the sun.<sup>15</sup> Many people told me when they had become tanned they received negative reactions such as: “What happened to you?” or “What have you done?”<sup>16</sup><sup>17</sup> Someone else said that his sister directly relates a darker skin color to a lesser degree of hygiene.<sup>18</sup> These imagined ideas of what *hinlo* means, then, are not only limited to simply “washing” oneself or “cleaning” an area. Instead, in pursuance of *hinlo*, genealogical origin, phenotypic appearance, language proficiency, choice of language, as well as one’s occupation, education, are all examples of axes on how performances shape and negotiate power in relation to a given context. In other words, these performances produce meanings of how civilized one is, and as the Freudian triad anticipates that civilization demands cleanliness, order, and beauty, “the *asepsis* and *cleanliness* of streets, language, body, and habits appeared as the panaceas of progress and materialization in a modern nation” (González Stephan:200). That is to say, cleanliness, order, and beauty pertain to meanings of “citizenship”: the continuous negotiation of how one belongs to an imagined political community on the basis of status, rights, and responsibility (Cresswell 2013; Holston and Appadurai 1996; Anderson 2006).

Dirt, like *sagbot* and waste, has the potential to contaminate the cleanliness, order, and beauty from civilizing and modernizing places. Due to the potential of the perceived aesthetic, environmental, and health issues, it is increasingly commonplace that waste is considered as something that needs to be managed nowadays (Gille 2010; Gregson and Crang 2015; Hawkins 2001). According to Alexander and Reno (2012:5–8), the combination of social processes such as urbanization and the intensification of production gradually created a demand for an external management of waste practices. The growth of waste resulted in waste as a mass noun of which the origins cannot be traced to individuals anymore, hence maintaining anonymity (Reno 2012). Hawkins phrases this proliferation as the “ethos of disposability”: “the capacity for serial replacement is also the capacity to throw away without concern” (2001:9). In Metro Cebu, the highly visible plastic sachets in *sari-sari* stores (neighborhood sundry stores) incorporate this serial replacement. In the eyes of several of the people to whom I spoke, the so-called “sachet

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<sup>15</sup> Lalang. Conversation. February 6, 2018. & Jay. Conversation. February 19, 2018. & Vanvan. February 19, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Janus. Conversation. March 18, 2018. & Sitoy. Conversation. May 7, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> Of course, in certain circumstances one’s skin color can take a positive connotation, as for instance Janus told me about the cycling competitions he was in. He believed that competitors sometimes were already feared by seeing him, as his darker skin color would reveal that he had been out in the sun, hence that he would have practiced a lot.

<sup>18</sup> Kerwin. Conversation. March 19, 2018.

mentality” reflects “the Filipino lifestyle”: it was claimed that the tropical weather would never lead to food shortages, wherefore the small amounts in sachets revealed the absence of the need for saving food. And, moreover, the low prices would make the sachets affordable and would fit many Filipinos’ daily incomes.<sup>19</sup> Even though these comments are arguable, its convenience of immediacy is evident. Important to note, moreover, is the materiality of sachets: following the recent innovation of plastic, its consumption has altered the outcomes for people’s disposal practices:

Our way of living before, we don’t have a problem with garbage. We eat only biodegradable things. If we have packaging and then it’s only banana leaves and then we throw it somewhere else. If we eat something, it’s only fish bones, and it will go back to the sea. Are you familiar with *puso*? Hanging rice. Yeah, that’s the kind of rice that we celebrate that much in Cebu. It’s all biodegradable, [the wrap] comes from coconut. Then we throw it. It’s okay.<sup>20</sup>

Though any sort of waste, including biodegradable, may bring nuisances, hazard, or harm, the global attention to plastic waste, such as the Great Pacific garbage patch, has increased awareness of some of the environmental impacts (Reno 2015). Christopher’s comment, however, points to how disposal practices are gradually transforming, what I will discuss in the next section.

### **1.3 Ritual performances of waste segregation**

Following the rise of global, moral problematization of waste and its corresponding disposal, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Local Government Units (LGUs) of Metro Cebu and their *barangays* have been paying more attention to its management. Similarly to other places in the world, Metro Cebu intends to pursue “zero waste” models that strives to reduce the quantities of waste sent to landfills and dumpsites.<sup>21</sup> One of the efforts that is made is the segregation of waste at the household level. For instance, since March 1, 2018, a city ordinance (CO1361 UG 2031) in Cebu City mandates its citizens to segregate in the ways that the city has indicated, as well as when and where the garbage should be disposed (see Appendix I for the complete announcement). Currently, the segregation system at the household

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<sup>19</sup> Christopher. Interview. April 2, 2018. & Onyot. Conversation. April 4, 2018. & Julieta. Conversation. April 7, 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Christopher. Interview. April 2, 2018.

<sup>21</sup> The difference between a landfill and a dumpsite is that the former needs to be sanitary by making sure that waste and its effects only stay within the landfill area by using a liner at the bottom to catch liquids and a cover of soil to deter pests and bad smells; in contrary to the latter (see [www.guyenterprise.com/solidwaste/dumpvsland.htm](http://www.guyenterprise.com/solidwaste/dumpvsland.htm)). Despite the law has prohibited the use of open dumpsites by law (RA 9003). The former dumpsite in Cebu City, often called Inayawan or White Road, is often called landfill; and even though it has been opened as a landfill, it has been operated as a dumpsite and it has been used 18 years longer than it was supposed to.

level consists of four categories:

- *Malata*: Bisaya for biodegradable (waste);
- *Dili malata*: Bisaya for non-biodegradable (waste);
- Special waste: waste that has the potential to cause harm, such as medical waste and e-waste;<sup>22</sup>
- Residuals: this category encompasses everything that does not belong to any of the three categories.

When I asked people why they thought that not everyone would throw their waste segregated in the trash bin, most people answered that “it is a lack of discipline”. But following the words from González Stephan, “discipline is limiting because it is limited. It is ruled by a logocentric dynamic that does not accept another logic” (2003:199). In fact, looking closer at these relatively new forms of waste disposal, they demand people to carry out “ritual performances of assemblages of actions and beliefs, mental to the constitution of habitus” (Hawkins 2001:12). Like Bell demonstrates how ritualization involves “production of a ritualized body which in turn, produces ritualized practices” (1992:93), the ritual performances of waste segregation would communicate that one is willing to do a sacrifice to be a “responsible” or “disciplined” citizen of Metro Cebu. In other words, the way how one disposes waste is a performance of the self wherein the meaning of being citizen is constructed through the ritualization of “discipline” (Butler 1990).

Taking into consideration that the practice of waste segregation at source has only been introduced since 2004 (Premakumara et al. 2004:976),<sup>23</sup> this requires that citizens need to seriously restructure their habits. One needs to not only know what kind of material their waste consists of, but one also needs to understand how a material decomposes *if* it is capable of decomposition, as well as if the material is not “contaminated” wherefore it may not be decomposable anymore or it might have even become hazardous. At the end of my fieldwork I delivered a presentation. I included a small test in which the audience had to vote in which bin they had to dispose a certain type of waste. Interestingly, from the 24 items that I had shown and the ten people that had voted, only two items were unanimously put in the same category. Despite of that the people in the audience were familiar with segregating as well as the purpose of it, the rest of the results was very disparate (see Appendix II for the results). It left the audience with questions or comments such as: “What comprises residuals?”, “Why is this not biodegradable?”, “Why is this not recyclable?”, and “I am being educated as a nurse and I did

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<sup>22</sup> In fact, despite of it has been announced that special waste would also be collected, in reality this has not been executed yet, according to an executive assistant of CCENRO. (Sebastian. Interview. May 3, 2018.)

<sup>23</sup> That is, CO1361 UG 2031 has intermittently been implemented since 2004.



not know that something like special waste existed.”<sup>24</sup><sup>25</sup> Their reactions reflected not only the ambiguity of the categories (see also Figure 6), but also how their actual understanding has little to do with their actions. Instead, it seems that the government’s efforts to overlay “old” disposal practices with waste segregation requires a lot of knowledge about a system that is not daily preached by any form of information. Some indicated they had been taught about waste segregation in school, but since not everyone learnt it in school, let alone the high rate of out-of-school children in the Philippines (see Unicef 2010), it is an achievement to master the ever-changing categorization of waste. In addition, the executive assistant of Cebu City Environment and Natural Resources Office (CCENRO) confessed that the English categories might need to be translated into Bisaya.<sup>26</sup> For Christopher the English labels were even proof that it is an idea that waste segregation is heartily received due to its foreign origins, hence ideas of modernization, while it mismatches the local context.<sup>27</sup> Having the ritual aspects of waste segregation in mind, in the next section I will describe what some people believe how waste should be disposed.



**FIGURE 6:** Picture of some ambiguous categories written on trash bins at the pier “Santa Rosa Olango - Hilton” on Mactan Island. The absent “residuals” bin is supposed to carry the non-recyclable waste, such as diapers, while the biodegradable waste could contain many sorts of (recyclable) food leftovers, and the non-biodegradable waste could contain (recyclable and non-recyclable) plastics. The picture is taken by Janus on May 27, 2018.

<sup>24</sup> Before, the segregation system consisted of only two categories: *dili malata* and *malata*. Years later, the category residuals was created. And today, the category special waste has been added (Kerwin. Conversation. March 19, 2018.)

<sup>25</sup> Fieldnotes. May 4, 2018.

<sup>26</sup> Sebastian. Interview. May 3, 2018.

<sup>27</sup> Christopher. Interview. April 2, 2018.

#### 1.4 Getting rid of waste

Many people in Metro Cebu were able to get rid of their waste by putting their trash out on a certain designated place on certain given days, where a garbage collector will pick it up. This, however, did not apply everywhere. According to Christopher, many places in the mountains did not benefit from garbage collection. He even said that often the more remote an area is, the more likely there is no garbage collection. He believed that many people there see value in their biodegradable waste, namely turning it from compost into the fertilizer for their plants. For their waste that consists of plastic, however, they would burn it to get rid of it.<sup>28</sup> But the reasons that people would burn plastic could also be in their understanding of being “a good citizen”, wherein they strive as much for cleanliness, order, and beauty as waste segregation implies. For example, when I stayed in *purok* Santa Filomena in Talisay City,<sup>29</sup> a *purok* wherein people dwell who are relocated from sites such as the Inayawan dumpsite or from “danger zones” in squatted areas, Lea explained to me that she and her family were aware of the government struggling with the amounts of waste. She and her family consequently decided to burn plastic to minimize plastic waste. In addition, seeing the lightness of the materials and that the designated places of waste are often on the side of the streets or a designated hole, she said burning would prevent it from flying or crawling around. Moreover, the eyes from Lea’s mother lighted up when she added that burning plastic actually keeps the mosquitoes on a distance.<sup>30</sup> Hence, in pursuance of maintaining the social environmental order, plastic was burned (Hawkins 2001).

Also, sometimes the lack of access to basic needs leads to contaminating the area. Today Jennie lives with fifteen of her family members in one house. Before she used to live in “a squatter area”. Although garbage collection is supposed to be free, in her neighborhood every house needed to pay five pesos to make the garbage collection come. It can be therefore a burden to pay this amount of money when the money is already needed for other things. Moreover, Jennie mentioned that many families in squatter areas lack a “C.R.”, wherefore they consequently pee and poo in plastic bags in their houses.<sup>31</sup> Since the house is a place that is highly related that one needs to maintain *hinlo* (see 1.1), they got rid of their excrements by throwing it somewhere else, may it be in the gutter or in the river. Not only stands out that there is not really an alternative for these families to get rid of their excrements, but also how the house is still a representation of the self, while excrements in the gutter and in the river appear to not threaten their ideas of being *hinlo* or not.<sup>32</sup>

Someone who surprised me was Evelyn, a single mother. Evelyn extensively explained

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<sup>28</sup> Christopher. Interview. April 2, 2018.

<sup>29</sup> Santa Filomena is a pseudonym.

<sup>30</sup> Lea and Antonia. Interview. April 25, 2018.

<sup>31</sup> A “C.R.” is short for comfort room, a euphemism that is used to refer to the room where the toilet is found.

<sup>32</sup> Jennie. Interview. April 27, 2018.

me she understood the need for waste segregation and “appropriate” waste disposal. For her, the main reasons to segregate were that she could make something useful out of waste. When one day it was time for me to get rid of the waste I had generated in *purok* Santa Filomena, she lent me a hand. Together we walked outside to a place where she consequently hung it on a branch next to another plastic bag that was swinging in the wind. At that moment, I thought she had contradicted herself by not disposing waste “appropriately”, that is, putting the trash on a designated place. But looking back at it, it again pointed out how notions of citizenship dictate that “dirt” should be placed at a place that we consider as not part of the “self” to maintain the view of being *hinlo* at that given moment.<sup>33</sup> This means we put waste where we do not believe the cleanliness of our selves is threatened. In combination with beliefs that garbage collection does not function at all times and everywhere, Lea, Jennie, and Evelyn all show that they, too, intend to maintain cleanliness, order, and beauty to be “good” citizens.

Yet, for some people waste can still be maintained in the house or close to the house. Eleanor, for instance, emphasized that she experienced that since she separates biodegradable waste from non-biodegradable waste, it does not smell “yucky” anymore.<sup>34</sup> Due to the absence of unpleasant smells, her self-perception of being *hinlo* was thus not threatened by putting waste nearby.

Some people, who in their speech seemed to feel distinct from “people with few resources”, believed that the presence of waste outside the trash bin was a result of that they had other concerns that they prioritized above “environmental issues”, something that Wex (2007) observed, too. But exactly this reasoning was what some of them used as a justification for their own generated food waste. As Naomi told:

I had a friend who was telling me, a while back, she doesn’t feel super guilty when she throws food away, because she’s like: “If I throw food away, a scavenger will find it, and he can eat it.”

The times that I ate with Janus, he would similarly find a reason why it did not matter that he ordered more than he could eat. By pouting his lips and quickly raising up his eyebrows simultaneously, he would point to the dogs and cats below or close to our table: “They are going to be happy with it”. These comments that resonate the idea of someone’s trash is another’s treasure actually reveal the way discourses of citizenship are played out. While the ones with food leftovers have enjoyed it cleanly and orderly, those who are perceived as lesser citizens are allowed to enjoy it even when the cleanliness of the food was less. In other words, these food leftovers did not threaten the image of the “civilized” self. In the next chapter, I will look at how

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<sup>33</sup> Evelyn. Conversation. April 25, 2018. & Fieldnotes. April 27, 2018.

<sup>34</sup> Eleanor. Conversation. April 26, 2018.

waste is spread throughout the city and how waste influences the way that places are seen as civilized and modernized and the other way around.

## 2



### Waste geographies

It is Sunday evening, the sky is black and I am on the back seat of Janus' motorcycle. It is the motorcycle he rides for both an extra income as *habal habal* (motor taxi) driver and for leisure. After seeing a sunset in the mountains at Toledo on the west side of the island, we arrive at the east side again at Naga's boulevards. Over there, we decide to have some rice with "barbecue", all sorts of different pieces of meat like chickens and pork grilled in a red, sweet sauce. Though I am used that you either eat here with fork and spoon or with bare hands, this time the waitress pulls plastic gloves from a box that she carries around, of which the first one seems to be unfit, as she shakes it off from her hand to the ground. When she offers another glove to Janus, he looks confused to it, saying he has never eaten with one.

While disentangling the coconut leaves which are wound around the *puso* (hanging rice), Janus tells me then about a college friend who stole a quite expensive calculator from him. He says he initially believed he lost it, until he recognized due to a minor defect that his friend had it now. However, Janus did not want to confront his friend with it, as he said he would embarrass his friend with that. So instead he figured he would challenge him for a basketball game, knowing that he would be better than his friend. If Janus would win, he would win the calculator and the other way around. His friend agreed with him. Janus won the game and he got his calculator back.

After we finish our meal, we walk across the boulevard and sit on the wall that divides the sea from the land. About two meters below us, the sea splashes to the walls. Janus explains that many young couples come here to enjoy a romantic stroll, a place where they can temporarily detach from their families with whom they usually live with. At one point two gray-haired women pass by and start clapping in their hands and singing in front of us. Janus shakes his head and says he does not have anything. Then the people next to us stretch their arms and give some small coins to the two women. We thereafter stand up and both of us seem to share the same idea of trying to grab some plastic cups and bottles in order to bring it to a trash bin. But we are perplexed as we walk around and we cannot find one. Janus sighs: "No wonder that the people throw their waste on the streets."<sup>35</sup>

In the last chapter I have argued how people's disposal practices are performances of citizenship. But does this also apply to those that "just" throw their trash anywhere? In this chapter I will suggest the notion of waste geographies as a way to think about how waste and place relate to and result in experiences of where one does not feel a sense of belonging to. In order to sift these waste geographies out, I will first describe how the urban areas in Metro Cebu are organized. Secondly, I will show how narratives of *pakikisama*, *maikog*, *hiya*, and *uwaw* embody power

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<sup>35</sup> Fieldnotes. March 4, 2018.

relations that become ingrained in bodies and places. Thirdly, on the basis of smellscape I explore how sensory experiences relate to mapping a place, yet how these sensory experiences are entangled with both expectations and actual perceptions. Fourthly, I return to the notions of modernization and citizenship in order to show how waste geographies stigmatize groups of people.

## **2.1 Cognitive maps of consumption and litter**

Metro Cebu's street scenes are largely void of open, free, and shared places. To my knowledge, the only open, free and shared places that are present in Cebu City are IT Park, Plaza Sugbu, Plaza Independencia, Heritage Park, Fuente Osmeña, and Fort San Pedro. Other present open places in Cebu City rather highlight individualism and privatization, as Connell (1997) has similarly shown what has happened to Manila. Due to the rise of private transport, increased consumption, and the emergence of consumer landscapes, Manila has enhanced patterns of security, exclusivity, and isolation. An example of this is the construction of malls. Malls are places of commerce, events, and recreation, yet at the same time they function as places where less affluent people "are largely excluded to consume" and they are forbidden floors for "hawkers, beggars, and street vendors of the informal sectors, alongside the spontaneous market of local produce" (Connell 1997). Moreover, malls are strongly connected to car ownership, as the corresponding infrastructure particularly supports car-driving people, that brings one from their house to the car, driving into the parking place of the mall. Like cars, malls can serve as an extension of providing an environment that "excludes heat, humidity, and environmental pollution" (Connell 1997:433). Malls and other open, privatized places therefore create a division between the formal and informal and the contrasted experiences reinforce ideas of that everything outside these places is "unregulated and chaotic" (Connell 1997). It is what González Stephan (2003:196) calls a strategy of "uniformizing" for the "modernizing project", wherein censuses, classification of people, monuments, language, compulsory education, legal and political authorities become justified, and everything that lacks the "rigid borders" seems uncivilized. In other words, it implies processes of shared remembering and shared forgetting to imagine what belongs to the modernizing project and what does not belong (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi and Levy 2011).

The only places that are left for everyone are the roads. People's choice of mode of transportation becomes a reflection of one's position in the social hierarchy. While increasingly more streets become paved, streets are mainly dominated and occupied by motorized vehicles, in particular the privately owned cars.<sup>36</sup> A complete designated place for pedestrians, such as a

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<sup>36</sup> And even within these choices of modes of transportation, very few women would ride a motorbike and even fewer a bicycle: in the three months that I stayed in Metro Cebu, I have spotted one woman riding a bicycle.



pavement, is rather an exception than the rule and transportation such as walking and cycling are rather associated as a way of commuting for the poor, being exposed to the sun, no air-conditioner, making one sweat and with the heat that “one could get a heart attack”.<sup>37</sup> One’s choice of mode of transportations are examples of forms of (non-)consumption. Jaffe and de Koning (2016) state that consumption holds an important function in reproducing social and spatial divisions in urban areas, and also how, in regard to social position, citizenship is gradually more shaped by decisions what to consume, what to appreciate and where to be seen. So even the way an individual moves her or himself on the road is an example of how hierarchies of “modernizing citizens” are played out, influencing the “production of space” (Lefebvre 1991). In other words, on the basis of cognitive maps who should consume what, where, and when, the individuals’ decisions act as performances for one’s social belonging in political economic structures (Jaffe and de Koning 2016:87–100). This notion, coined as “leisure geographies” (Jaffe and de Koning 2016:87), considers the sense of belonging as having an affinity for specified places or situations. Thinking with leisure geographies allows us to see that one’s movement through places is conducted by such cognitive maps. I argue that such cognitive maps where individuals perceive a lack of affinity could be applicable, too, resulting in the neglect of a place. I suggest to call this sort of cognitive maps waste geographies. In the next section I will dissect how people may express or feel their waste geographies on the basis of Tagalog and Bisayan terms of feelings, namely *hiya*, *maikog*, *pakikisama*, and *uwaw*.

## **2.2 Littering through *hiya*, *maikog*, *pakikisama* to *uwaw***

It was 6pm, and the sun had just set. Just as any other day, it quickly became dark. A similar feeling of contrast I felt when I entered the very geometrical looking café where the heat of the sun turned into the breeze of coolness produced by the air conditioner. About 15 minutes later than the time we had set, Naomi walked in. After saying hi, she sat down and ordered something small to eat and drink. She told that this café only provides coffee cups for takeout if requested and one has to pay more for it. The café claims they do it for the sake of the quality of the drinks the café prepares. Despite it is not because of waste prevention, she believed it is good. At one point, Naomi reported about how she believes that some places are considered “okay” to litter, such as “stores like 7-Eleven”, while others are regarded as places that are supposed to look clean.<sup>38</sup> She looked thoughtful:

I don’t know, maybe it’s because when people already get to the mall, it is already very clean. There’s a term in Cebuano, *maikog*. I would feel, like... Kind of... Ashamed almost, to throw my

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<sup>37</sup> Kerwin. Conversation. March 19, 2018. & Fieldnotes. March 30, 2018.

<sup>38</sup> 7-Eleven is an multination chain of convenience stores.

trash in a place that is so clean.

She then explained me that *maikog* is a feeling of being ashamed. When I asked if it is the same as the Tagalog term *hiya*, a word that roughly translates to the shame or embarrassment that one feels when his or her self-esteem is affected, she said it is not and elaborated the term *maikog* with an example:

[People] would feel ashamed for something in a place that is really clean, as opposed to a place like a 7-Eleven, or in the street, where there's already trash there. [mimics a voice] "Oh, it's fine, like I am not the only one who's doing it, so it's fine." As opposed to a mall. If you litter in a mall, everyone is like: "Are you seriously littering in a mall?"<sup>39</sup>

*Maikog* therefore seems to refer how one is restrained in acting in a certain way due to the potential shame one would feel. In other words, where cognitive maps such as "leisure geographies" directs individuals in their decisions of performances of consumption, in a similar manner do waste geographies direct individuals in their decisions of performances of littering, expressed in feelings such as *maikog*.

But *maikog* is not the only notion that leads to certain actions. One day I was sitting with Jade in a place, when she told me a story about an outdoor area where she had wanted to put a sign how to minimize one's footprint by suggestions such as taking one's waste with him or her. However, her boyfriend eventually dissuaded her from doing that, claiming that people could experience that as preachy. According to her, his comment has its roots in the notion of *pakikisama*.<sup>40</sup> *Pakikisama* is a sort of conformity to one's fellow man (Wong 2010), which in this case has led to an avoidance of confrontation. Because precisely confrontation could lead to that the one confronted would experience *hiya* or an embarrassment that affects one's self-esteem. It is important to note that *hiya* is not limited to a personal or inner embarrassment, but it will be experienced as a sort of reputation loss, also known as the notion of losing face.<sup>41</sup> And of course, seeing it was not Jade's intention to embarrass anyone, she decided to not put this sign.

The desired behavior, instead, is how one should show a certain self-effacing humbleness towards the other person. This behavior, called *uwaw* or *ulaw*, is based on the idea of that every person acquires a certain value or status and that others should act upon it to maintain his or her status.<sup>42</sup> In fact, this behavior is a great indicator of revealing social power dynamics. For

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<sup>39</sup> Naomi. Interview. April 30, 2018.

<sup>40</sup> Jade. Conversation. March 16, 2018.

<sup>41</sup> It should be emphasized that this especially applies to people's behaviors. It is wont to comment someone on their appearance, and comments such as "you're skinny, you're sexy", "you look beautiful" or "you became fat" are totally normal, even if you barely know the other person.

<sup>42</sup> The terms *uwaw* and *hiya* were usually translated as "getting shy".

instance, younger people are expected to greet an elder person with the gesture *mano* by bringing the hand of the elder person towards their foreheads while bowing slightly as a sign of respect or acting *uwaw*. Additionally, being opinionated is left to the ones with a higher status and giving your opinion is usually not considered as an act of *uwaw* when people do not know each other.<sup>43</sup>

In short, all these expressions (*hiya*, *maikog*, *pakikisama*, and *uwaw*) can be seen as ways of “how people constitute urban environments through embodied and imaginative practices” or in other words, how place-making happens (Pink 2008:176). Important to notice is how place-making highly depends on who is and who is not present. As Lee and Ingold articulate it in regard to “shared walking”: “We can see and feel what is really a learning process of being together, in adjusting one’s body and one’s speech to the rhythms of others, and of sharing (or at least coming to see) a point of view” (2006:82–83). Through my own place-making processes in Metro Cebu, I learnt that male figures could litter streets by urinating provided that they would have their back turned to any passersby and it was expected that both male and female passersby would avert their eyes from this act.<sup>44</sup> This way, *pakikisama* can be maintained by each individual’s *uwaw* behavior, and any thoughts of acting differently should raise feelings of *maikog*, risking to cause the other *hiya*. Similarly, I heard and observed that waste was dropped in gutters, streams and on the streets while being in a *jeepney* (mode of public transportation) or a car. Taking the notion of waste geographies in consideration, these acts of urinating or throwing waste have not taken place in isolation. Instead, the lack of affinity was exactly experienced at the place where was littered, and also a place where a lack of “civilization” was sensed, such as the streets or a 7-Eleven. In other words, the places where people seem to litter are almost social poems of depicting how much defilement they could permit. In the next section, I will use smellscapes as a way to show how waste geographies are embedded in socio-economic inequalities as well as environmental inequalities, and how they lead to some beliefs of that certain groups of people would be particularly responsible for waste issues.

### 2.3 Insane smellscapes

In many conversations that I had in regard to waste it was often said that the presence of waste on the streets had to do with a “lack of discipline” from “squatters” or “informal settlers”.<sup>45</sup> These comments were never supported with observations of people that were caught in the act, instead, it appeared to be based on the association that squatter areas were full of litter. This was brought to the fore to me when Eleanor was helping me in interpreting Bisaya. When Lea told how she used to throw her excrements in the gutter and the river in the squatter area (see 1.4),

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<sup>43</sup> Fieldnotes. March 19, 2018.

<sup>44</sup> Fieldnotes. March 17, 2018.

<sup>45</sup> Kerwin. Conversation. March 19, 2018. & Fieldnotes. April 8, 2018.

Eleanor first understood that all the waste was thrown in the river. Eleanor consequently interpreted that this is why “it always smells so yucky over there”.<sup>46</sup> However, Henshaw and Bruce (2012) point out that any sort of perception, including odor, is ingrained within cultural and belief systems, and therefore partially build on expectations. How different the final reception of perception is became clear when I accompanied a group of people that work at a NGO and we went to the dumpsite in *barangay* Inayawan, Cebu City, and the dumpsite in *barangay* Tapul, Talisay City. When we approached the dumpsites the other people in the car started to cover their nose with tissues and scarfs, seemingly perceiving a smell that evoked aversion. For me, however, I could only perceive a slightly odd smell, and it was rather the absence of something stinky that surprised me than its presence. It was nonetheless often said by both people work at the mentioned NGO as well as people who used to work on the dumpsite that smells were perceived as abject when the sun was very strong or when it had rained.<sup>47</sup> These “smellscapes” (Henshaw 2014:5), however, emphasize how expectations and perceptions influence each other and raise questions about both the perceptions of the other people in the car as well as mine.

Bell (2018) argues that socio-economic inequalities are often accompanied with environmental inequalities: people that experience more socio-economic inequalities tend to experience poorer air quality and house isolation, as well as having lesser possibilities of avoidance of air pollution, such as the pollution that generates from industries and dumpsites. In the context of Metro Cebu, expected and actual perceptions of smells appear to be seemingly distributed along these lines. Looking at Cebu City’s dumpsite in *barangay* Inayawan – that has surged as a reclamation site – health and environmental inequalities exacerbated when it appeared that the Inayawan dumpsite was supposed to close in 2005 after six years of operating by reaching its full capacity, but only closed partially in 2012, and totally in 2015 (Sunstar 2016; Villarica 2017). However, in 2016 it reopened to “help save the City millions from throwing its trash in Consolacion” (SunStar Philippines 2016). Between June 2016 and June 2017 a to-and-fro of re-closing and re-opening the Inayawan dumpsite occurs in dispute whether the maximum capacity has actually been reached or not (Villarica 2017). Today it is supposed to be only used as a transfer station before the waste gets to *barangay* Garing in Consolacion or *barangay* Tampuan in Aloguinsan (respectively 27 and 52 kilometers from Inayawan), since finding a new landfill is difficult due to the need of the neighbors’ social acceptability.<sup>48</sup> Yet, the Inayawan dumpsite still needs to be rehabilitated and to date it continues to contain all sorts of hazards. When I spoke to someone who works at Inayawan’s dumpsite, he explained that a requirement of a sanitary landfill is that it has a lining to cover the ground, preventing it from leaking liquids,

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<sup>46</sup> Eleanor. Interview. April 25, 2018.

<sup>47</sup> Fieldnotes. April 14, 2018.

<sup>48</sup> William. Conversation. March 27, 2018.

but seeing a lack of budget, Inayawan could not suffice. As a response to the tragedy of the waste landslide in Payatas, Manila, in 2000 which demolished hundreds of houses and killed 300 lives (Gaillard and Cadag 2009), Inayawan's waste hills were not supposed to be higher than two meters, yet they are. Additionally, with high tide waste falls into the water or flies around.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, fires on the dumpsite have also led to a number of incidents.<sup>50</sup> And last but not least, the generated smells affect not only *barangay* Inayawan but also the neighborhoods around, such as the other reclamation site South Reclamation Project, of which Franco anticipated that the smells can result in problems for the tourism industry.<sup>51</sup>

But it is not even necessary to live close to a dumpsite to experience the nuisances of waste outside trash bins. The most mentioned nuisance is how drainage systems get clogged with – especially plastic – waste. This may go unnoticed till a heavy rain falls, leading to flooded streets. Several people mentioned me that this is worse “downtown”, the areas that are close to the sea, of which the elevation is lower.<sup>52</sup> Remarkably, these areas are also often where less affluent people dwell. And perhaps also where garbage collection seems to happen less. For instance, Christopher told me that in *barangay* Pasil, Cebu City, garbage collection does not happen for some unknown reason.<sup>53</sup> Franco repeatedly stressed that issues related to waste perhaps start as health concerns in the first place, but with time develop a lot of side effects, too: “Because we have flooded streets, traffic becomes even worse. And traffic is bad, you get, *kanang* (like), people go late to their work. You know, many people going to their respective destinations. Suddenly it becomes an economic problem.” He subsequently stated that smells do not only affect “sanitation”, but “sanity”, too. He explained that on the hill where he lives are many businesses that dispose their graywater in the stream due to a lack of a water collection system. Recently, the smell had become so bad that Franco described the smell as “it drives you mad, no shit”. Yet, he described his family's experience as they were suffering in different ways than some other inhabitants of this neighborhood, such as a small family that was living next to the canal, of which one of the children did not stop coughing because of the smell: “The moment [people of the middle class] encounter these problems, especially if you're in a private subdivision, you can always complain, and someone gets to solve it immediately”. People who squat, however, who have built a house on top of the stream out of desperation to live somewhere, “where are they supposed to file it against? They're already living illegal, they can't find themselves in a helpless situation, because they can't complain, because it's not their spot,

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<sup>49</sup> Hansoy. Interview. March 26, 2018.

<sup>50</sup> Hansoy. Interview. March 26, 2018. & Boboy. Interview. April 25, 2018. & Diana. Interview. April 25, 2018.

<sup>51</sup> Franco. Interview. April 12, 2018.

<sup>52</sup> Janus. Conversation. March 1, 2018. & Franco. Interview. April 12, 2018. & Marjorie. Conversation. April 18, 2018.

<sup>53</sup> Christopher. Interview. April 2, 2018.

it's not legally their land".<sup>54</sup>

In regard to these stories, it seems that people's olfactory perceptions of waste-related issues affect all sorts of places in Metro Cebu, nonetheless the extent of experiencing nuisances are unequally distributed along the same lines as socio-economic inequalities (Bell 2010). And yet, exactly the people who are sometimes held responsible for littering – such as people who live in squatter areas – appear to be more affected by the consequences of waste issues rather than causing it. Instead, the association of perceived dirt or bad smells in the areas where these people live are used as the missing link for understanding waste issues. In the next section, I will look how this sort of perceptions may arise and how it relates to how modernization or civilization is imagined.

#### **2.4 *Promdi* waste**

Appadurai (2006) explains that due to the imagination of a “modern” place as something sovereign and stable containing a reliable census as well as stable and transparent categories, flows of migration and immigration reveals the ambiguity of who is included in the “we” of a place and who is not included in this imagination. That is, who belongs to the imagination of the “self” and who belongs to the imagination of the “Others”. At the moment a place deals with economic decline, the people of a place realize how their imagination is not as sovereign and stable as they thought. With the disclosure of social insecurities, questions emerge if the “Others” are entitled to make use of social services of the place. Rather than projecting the fears for the failure of the modern, sovereign and stable place that has no face, it is projected toward the “Others” (Appadurai 2006). In the context of Metro Cebu, it appears that the “Others” are the ones who often dwell in squatter areas.

According to Mayong, a woman who works at a NGO involved with the relocation of people from squatter areas and the dumpsite, many people who end up in these areas come from the “province”. Their only options for work are jobs related to agriculture and farming, something that does not appeal to them as much as what they believe they are able to get in an urban setting.<sup>55</sup> When these people from the province arrive, finding a job seems harder than anticipated, perhaps owing to a lack of necessary skills. Going back is not always an option due to a lack of money or that they are too ashamed to tell their families that they did not succeed in their goals.<sup>56</sup> People, who regard themselves as belonging to the middle-class, have derogatorily classified these people who they regard as inferior to themselves as *promdi*, a Taglish

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<sup>54</sup> Franco. Interview. April 12, 2018.

<sup>55</sup> Mayong also pointed out that some of these people from provinces are offered jobs that do not turn out to be the jobs as promised; some of these job offers are means of disguising forms of human trafficking.

<sup>56</sup> Mayong. Conversation. April 14, 2018.



abbreviation for *promdi probinsya* or from the province (Rafael 2000:173). The *promdi* would have a so-called *bakya* taste, that is, “cheap, gauche, naive, provincial and terribly popular” (Rafael 2000:171).<sup>57</sup> This *bakya* background would even extend to their speech, since their use of English would be incorrect and moreover, the person who speaks would not even be able to notice it. The fear for being ascribed as a *promdi* or having *bakya* taste affect some people in such ways that I experienced how they suddenly became nervous about their English proficiency, starting to nervously laugh and stating that they were “nose bleeding”.<sup>58</sup> It was Charlene who pointed out to me that the performance of nose bleeding typically happens when these people are surrounded by other Filipinos, wherefore they become conscious for every little potential mistake they make in English that may be laughed at by their peers as “a failed version of the urban elite” (Rafael 2000:173). Using the notion of waste geographies, we see how some people distinguish their own “belonging” (the urban middle-class) from “others” (the lower-class associated with *bakya* taste). It is then that in the eyes of the urban middle-class that the ones with *bakya* taste are the ones who fail to be modern and civilized, and that this way the failure of a modern, sovereign and stable place is attributed to these people. In the next chapter, I will describe how different sorts of actors try to transform meanings of waste “from trash to treasure”.

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<sup>57</sup> According to Ephraim and Franco, these terms are barely used nowadays. That said, I will use them as a metaphor for some of the ideas that are attributed to specific groups of peoples.

<sup>58</sup> The term nose bleeding probably comes from either a movie called *Pasukob* (2007) or it is borrowed from Japanese manga and anime comics (Osborne 2018:123); the idea of nose bleeding is that one has to think so hard to find words resulting in one’s nose that starts to bleed.

### 3



## Upcycling

What are the things that archaeologists will find from us one day?  
What are the traces that we will leave behind?<sup>59</sup>

Firstly, I will analyze what kind of social initiatives as well as how the government are present in Metro Cebu, clustering them in a simplified oversight. I will emphasize how all these social initiatives are intrinsically connected with political motives. After that, I will look at how the government and NGOs give meanings to waste in the hierarchical *padrino* system. Thereupon, I show how a social initiative intends to teach how waste can create livelihoods. In 3.4, I discuss how social media platforms are not only media that can be used to break silences about waste issues, but also how they can be negotiated and performed. In the last section, I focus on Precious Plastic as a project that in order to minimize waste generation attempts to redesign items.

### 3.1 The visualization of waste as something useful

Following the perceptions of waste as something useful, several people in Metro Cebu undertake actions in an attempt of proselytizing their views of waste, whether they are at individual or collective level, and whether they are part of humdrum or odd situations. Many of these individuals are driven by the imagination of waste, that “especially when collective, can become the fuel for action” (Appadurai 1996:7). In a way, these actions can be understood as a claim for “the right to the city” (Lefebvre 1996), seeing that they demand political and social changes of their current perceptions of waste. Some of the collective actions could be considered as activities that social movements undertake, seeing how they negotiate cultural meanings, ideas, moralities, symbols, identities and power relations (Vivanco 2013).

I have created a simplified oversight of the groups of people in Metro Cebu that deal with waste in a collective manner (see Table 2). I have clustered the groups in four sectors: governing, livelihood-creating, virtual, and environmental. Before I will discuss the sectors and some of the

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<sup>59</sup> Naomi. Conversation. March 17, 2018.

groups, I would like to point out that each individual can have both within and outside their groups mutual, contesting and conflicting ideas (Juris 2008), but all of the mentioned individuals aim to alter people's relations to waste. While for instance *Zero Heroes* mainly intends to minimize people's waste generation, *Ecobricks* on the other hand tries to convert non-recyclable plastic into a useful object. This does not mean that these groups are antipodes; in fact, several groups, including *Zero Heroes* and *Ecobricks*, are planning to cooperate. But it still remains that *Ecobricks*' aim is rather the conversion of valuing materials, while *Zero Heroes* prioritizes that waste will not be generated in the first place. In addition, all the mentioned groups – implicitly and explicitly – consider waste as something that requires management. This management is regarded as a rational way of alleviating the issue. Performances that are driven by ideas of “doing good” for “society” and “the environment” – such as segregating and upcycling – are in fact embodied practices of their political interests (Hawkins 2001; Horton 2009:19). In other words, “all ecological projects (and arguments) are simultaneously political-economic projects (and arguments) and vice versa. Ecological arguments are never socially neutral any more than socio-political arguments are ecologically neutral” (Harvey 1993:25).

The sectors are based on what is the way that groups' communications and motivations are performed; none of the groups necessarily belongs to one sector only. Individuals that engaged in #5pcsDailyHabit, for instance, participated in “real” life, but their performance toward others took place on the Internet for the most part. The livelihood-creating sector deals with waste as something from which one can obtain a substantial amount of value to live from. The environmental sector is driven to handle waste based on the idea that waste is something that impacts the environment in a negative manner, wherefore it is necessary to alter people's perceptions of waste. Efforts that belong to the virtual sector could be regarded as motivated by how the Internet provides a platform to exchange information about waste across geographic places and times. Last but not least, the governing sector sees waste or its related components as something that chiefly needs to be governed by the government.

Sector	Groups	Perception of waste	Goals
<b>Governing</b>	<i>Mega Cebu</i> (NGO)	Waste as hazard; and manageable object	Create plans for the right infrastructure.
	<i>Our Cebu</i> (NGO)	Waste as hazard; and manageable object	Making LGUs comply with having and operating sanitary landfills according to the law.
<b>Livelihood-creating</b>	<i>Green Antz Builders</i>	Waste as commodity	Business; livelihood; and transforming waste into something useful.
	<i>Kwarta sa Basura</i>	Waste as resource	Livelihood; empowerment; transforming waste into something useful.
<b>Virtual</b>	<i>#5pcsDailyHabit</i>	Waste as hazard; and as disorder and matter out of place	Raising awareness.
	<i>Buhay Zero-Waste</i>	Waste as resource; and hazard	Sharing ideas how to live a zero waste lifestyle.
	<i>Movement for a Livable Cebu</i>	Waste as disorder and matter out of place	Platform to discuss about urban developments.
	<i>Paglaum sa Sugbo (Hope for Cebu)</i>	Waste as disorder and matter out of place	Platform to discuss about urban developments.
<b>Environmental</b>	<i>Basura Run</i>	Waste as hazard; and as disorder and matter out of place	Raising awareness.
	<i>EcoBricks</i>	Waste as resource	Transforming waste into something useful.
	<i>Precious Plastics</i>	Waste as resource	Transforming waste into something useful.
	<i>Your Local Eco-Friends</i>	Waste as resource and hazard	Raising awareness; transforming waste into something useful; sharing ideas how to live a zero waste lifestyle.
	<i>Zero Heroes</i>	Waste as resource and hazard	Raising awareness; and way of sharing ideas how to live a zero waste lifestyle.

**TABLE 2:** Simplified oversight of groups in Metro Cebu that deal with waste in some way or the other. Note that the table is neither exhaustive nor that any of the given aspects are fixed or that all goals are formulated. Moreover, many groups overlap in several aspects. The perceptions of waste are based on Moore's waste typology (2012).

### 3.2 Governing waste in a *padrino* system

While some people claimed that the “sachet mentality” emerges from “the Filipino lifestyle” which would be focused on today only (see 1.2), political projects appeared to be similarly known for the temporary periods they last: both mayors and *barangay* captains can only run for a three-year period. After that, elections loom the chance that the entire government administration changes and the associated projects from the previous government administration will not be continued (e.g., the project *Kwarta sa Basura*, see 3.3), since it would carry the name and fame of opponents. These practices are often attributed to be part of the “*padrino* system”, wherein on the one hand favors are given in a nepotistic manner as a form of reciprocity, while on the other hand negative reciprocity may lead to acts of revenge, such as the use of gossip, intrigue, slander, or violence (Wong 2010). Bankoff (2015) suggests that this *padrino* system is related to how the Philippines is constantly jeopardized by natural hazards: natural hazards – such as earthquakes, typhoons and floods – and the corresponding survival experiences may reinforce family bonds. The political model that had been introduced by the United States converted this family solidarity in a way that “family loyalty becomes nepotism, generosity becomes bribery, *utang na loob*<sup>60</sup> becomes corruption” (Jocano 1999:71 in Bankoff 2015:172). Moreover, the history of mayors from the LGUs from Metro Cebu reflect how running a place can be almost hereditary: “In Lapu Lapu City you have Rodaza, in Danao Durano, in Cebu City Osmeña, in Talisay City Gullas, in Naga Chiong, and in Mandaue City Ouano.”<sup>61</sup> Important to note is how timing plays a role in the practices of the *padrino* system. With the *barangay* elections of May 14 approaching, these sorts of issues become apparent. Working at the coastal resource management in Talisay City Hall, Amber told me that it is mandatory to participate in coastal cleanups. One day, she and a colleague had received and accepted an invitation for one. However, after the event, her colleague panicky told she had been interrogated by her bosses and how she was feeling threatened to lose her job. It appeared that the coastal cleanup had some link with a “rival” politician, and therefore the role of her colleague was impugned.<sup>62</sup>

Another point that Amber made is how the government struggles in budgets by the high presence of informal economy and a continuously growing population. It is no surprise then that the efforts of enforcement are usually short-lived; yet, the paradox is that the resulting impunity reinforces the struggle of maintaining or creating “order”.<sup>63</sup>

Naomi explained that she believes that the government’s efforts in attempting to solve solid waste issues is limited because “they have too many problems that they have to prioritize

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<sup>60</sup> The Tagalog *utang na loob* literally translated to “a debt of one’s inner self”. It embodies the notion of that a “self” is indebted to reciprocally pay back the favor to the “self” who initiated the favor. However, these “selves” can be extended to kin.

<sup>61</sup> Rose. Interview. April 24, 2018.

<sup>62</sup> Amber. Conversation. April 22, 2018.

<sup>63</sup> Amber. Conversation. April 22, 2018.

before trash. [...] Drugs is a really huge issue here. Also, like, the reproductive health bills, divorce bills, that's a big issue lately.”<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, when I spoke to John Michael from *Mega Cebu*, a NGO that deals with sustainable urban development in Metro Cebu, he indicated that wastewater is currently even a bigger issue than solid waste. To date, barely any wastewater has been treated in Metro Cebu, aggravating its water quality. John Michael thereafter provides me a handout that presents the goals of the entire project of Mega Cebu. After inspecting the handout, I asked if it is true that the short-term goals for solid waste management which indicate to be fulfilled in 2015 and 2016 are not yet reached. Then, he conceded that the project is indeed hampering due to the unwillingness of cooperation by some of the LGUs; an unwillingness that precisely starts to occur when another mayor comes into place.<sup>65</sup>

Yet, by far the most mentioned effort of the government was how “single-use plastics”<sup>66</sup> were banned. Interestingly, people dwelling in Talisay City – where a single-use plastic ban is absent – often referred to Cebu City’s single-use plastic ban. In Cebu City, where only a two-day ban is applied,<sup>67</sup> many people regarded Mandaue City as more “advanced” by having a ban during the entire week. These views might be explained by how plastic bans are seen as “new” signs of modernization, since often conversations about waste started with a reference that the Philippines “is still not like” some other countries, implicitly referring to a process that is expected that the Philippines will make in the future. When I asked people how they carry their groceries when they cannot obtain a plastic bag, they were often enthusiastic when they told me they get a paper bag instead, which is biodegradable, concluding that biodegradable waste is better for the environment than non-degradable waste. Naomi pointed out that it seems that people forget that paper is made out of a tree that goes hand in hand with misconceptions of what you can and what you cannot recycle, such as the limitations for recycling paper:

What really bothers me is that they put ‘Please recycle!’, but then like: you can’t recycle this paper, this paper is oily, this paper is stuffed with food. That’s for the same reason that you can’t recycle pizza boxes, because they’re oily because of the food.<sup>68</sup>

Mark Anthony also expressed the impracticality of replacing plastic bags with paper bags when

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<sup>64</sup> Naomi. Interview. April 30, 2018.

<sup>65</sup> John Michael. Conversation. April 18, 2018.

<sup>66</sup> In Mandaue City, CO 12-2010-562 prohibits the use of “disposable” plastic bags and polystyrene containers, while in Cebu City the CO 2343 only applies to “disposable” plastic bags.

<sup>67</sup> The executive assistant of CCENRO indicated that “the general proposal was a total ban, but during the public hearings, the business sectors asked it to implement it into phases”, but that a follow-through has not happened (Sebastian. Interview. May 3, 2018.) However, since August 1, 2018, mayor Tomas R. Osmeña has extended the implementation of the single-use plastic ban by seven days a week, but only within the boundaries of Cebu City hall offices. This time, single-use plastics include “straws, cups, plates, spoons, forks, plastic containers or plastic packaging”. See: <https://www.facebook.com/tommyrosmena/posts/2247858221921026>.

<sup>68</sup> Naomi. Interview. April 30, 2018.

people go to the so-called wet market – where fresh meat, fish and produce is sold – in *barangay* Suba, Cebu City. Seeing that a paper bag may become wet and breaks as well as they usually do not have a bag handle, he wondered if people avoid doing groceries on the days that plastic bags are banned. In other words, the ban does not seem to oversee the actual consequences of people's behavior. Moreover, in a study on the effects of Los Angeles County's plastic bag ban, Villareal and Feigenbaum (2012) question the environmental benefits of this ban due to the replacement of paper bags instead, seeing that the production and the recycling of plastic requires less energy and water than paper, and generate less greenhouse gas emissions.

### **3.3 Waste creating livelihoods**

In 2002, *barangay* Luz, a *barangay* that emerged as a relocation site for families that had lost their homes due to a fire in 1956, introduced the livelihood program *Kwarta sa Basura* (Cash from Trash). In pursuance of complying with the Solid Waste Management Act 0093, which demands reducing the amounts of waste that go to the dumpsite with 25%, the program has tried to transform people's perceptions of waste by teaching that waste is a resource from which one can earn money (Moore 2012). While the *barangay* provides the materials, inhabitants can convert their biodegradable waste into compost. Thereupon, they can sell the compost and earn some money with it. Besides that, some women's organizations arranged to collect materials. These materials are provided to members of the *barangay*, who gain skills in creating handicrafts, such as bags and hats, and are able to earn a livelihood from this (see Figure 7). According to the *barangay's* councillor, some women can earn more from this than their husbands, who often do construction work. Employing a participatory approach, this program has been able to tackle economic and social issues (see also Premakumara et al. 2014; Ancog, Archival and Rebanos 2012). However, the councillor also claimed that the last few years the program undergoes some issues due to the *padrino* politics. While the previous mayor had supported the program, the program nowadays is not as widespread as before due to a shortage of funds.<sup>69</sup> Another point that Christopher made was that the people are not dealing with their self-generated waste anymore, but waste from businesses instead, such as the residuals of self-adhesive papers. Then the question is whether they will value this waste the same way as they would respecting the waste they generate themselves.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> William. Interview. April 6, 2018.

<sup>70</sup> Christopher. Interview. April 2, 2018.





**FIGURE 7:**  
Items that  
are made for  
the *Kwarta  
sa Basura*  
project in  
*barangay  
Luz*.

### 3.4 Online waste

A lot of the social initiatives do not assemble in physical places. The Facebook groups *Movement for a Livable Cebu* and *Paglaum sa Sugbo (Hope for Cebu)* are both examples of online social networking platforms, spreading digital material, such as texts, videos and images, possibly reaching out to new groups of people and creating new networks, including onlookers (López León 2016). Many other groups, such as *Ecobricks* and *Zero Heroes*, use Facebook as an additional tool for communication. In any way, several people to whom I have spoken to experience Facebook as a very popular medium in the Philippines and that its general use could be considered as “part of the routine, habitual, tacit, normally unspoken sensitivities of everyday life” (Pink and Mackley 2013:678), while its use simultaneously functions as distinct ways of gaining knowledge in the dynamics between online and offline engagements (Postill and Pink 2012:126). They therefore contribute to the negotiation of “environmental” perceptions. While the previous mentioned groups are meant for those who want to discuss situations in Metro Cebu, most online groups target a wider reach; some will target the Philippines (e.g., Facebook groups *Buhay Zero-Waste*; *Straw Wars Philippines*), while others widen their scope to a transnational one. Online social networking platforms are therefore examples of digital tools that allow to exchange and negotiate information across geographic places (Juris 2012). Remarkable is how English is the main language of these Facebook groups that can probably be explained by the ways it is associated with a translocal reach, a language of instruction, and status (Rafael 2000) (see 1.1).

Social media platforms are also places that create opportunities to convey aspects of the imagined self, such as posting pictures one is concerned with. Seeing that social media platforms

are places with new contexts, McKay observes that “new norms for privacy, discretion, bullying, intrusion and copyright infringement” are emerging (2010:481). Because some norms prevail more than others, Facebook as a medium may overcome expressions and performances which in physical places are usually not considered as moral behavior. An example of this is how some expressions and performances might be regarded as being overly opinionated (see also 2.2). Janus, who likes to cycle, had posted a “status update” indicating that he was planning to go back cycling and asked who wanted to come along. When I asked him why he had not “tagged” the specific friends to whom he had directed this question or asked them in a personal message instead, he answered that in that way they would feel obliged to answer him positively, and this way, he regarded it as that it will be up to them whether to reply or not. When I asked him how we would deal with posing this question without the existence of Facebook and how he had dealt with posing similar questions before, he could not remember how he would be able to do this differently. That is, he imagined that he would not have been able to ask this question at all.<sup>71</sup> Also Julieta, a woman who administers a Facebook page that shares videos and images related to the consumption of plastic, told me that she sometimes had deleted the shared posts from her administrating peer, since in her eyes those posts are not relevant in regard to the followers’ motivations to “like” the page. She explained that she did this silently, since she was afraid that it would hurt her peer’s feelings if she would confront him with it.<sup>72</sup> In other words, both Julieta and Janus still perform acts of *pakikisama* while concurrently feeling *maikog* that prevents them from confronting other people (see 2.2). Yet, for example in Julieta’s case, the use of Facebook allowed her to alter the situation where she could still pursue her goal in informing about the consumption of plastic, while she did not risk to lose followers or to harm her peer.

Social media platforms, such as Facebook, have also given the opportunity to circulate images that were not picked up by formal journalists. That is, these images can break a silence and may have the potential to fire the imagination in a way that people are moved by it (Bonilla and Rosa 2015). In July 2014, Peter, a runner from Minglanilla, realized that many fellow runners threw their bottles of water on the ground after working out. Since then, he has been organizing events to combine running and collecting garbage.<sup>73</sup> These events, named *Basura Run* (Garbage Run), aim to raise awareness about the consumption of plastic and disposal practices. He told that during the run, some residents approach the runners to ask if their place can be cleaned and if they can take the residents’ garbage with them. He then explained that they are not going to clean their place, but show them how you can clean their place instead. Another way he tried changing disposal practices is challenging people to participate in the #5pcsDailyHabit, where one has to pick up 5 pieces of plastic litter every day for 21 days, take a picture of it,

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<sup>71</sup> Janus. Conversation. March 8, 2018.

<sup>72</sup> Julieta. Interview. April 7, 2018.

<sup>73</sup> In some countries, this is also known as “plogging”, that has started in Sweden in 2016.

throw it in the trash bin, and upload the picture. Considering waste outside the trash bin as disorder and matter out of place (Moore 2012), he believed that these sorts of performances contribute to make someone not throw trash on the ground anymore.<sup>74</sup> Important to mention is that the use of hashtags cannot merely be regarded as a performance of archiving (Bonilla and Rosa 2015). Indeed, they are rather symbolic performances of expressing oneself what this picture “really is about”. These pictures often come along with hashtags such as #SaveMotherEarth, #HealthyPlanetforFutureGenerations, #SaveOurChildrensFuture, and #NoToPlastic. These hashtags, then, function to show tacit meanings, such as that waste is a hazard (Moore 2012). Moreover, they also function as a sign of solidarity with those who participate, and thus, also as signs of participation (Bonilla and Rosa 2015). It is hard to know to whom these images actually reach, however, Naomi told me that when she started to know about zero waste, she looked up #zerowastecebu to find someone to talk to and relate to.<sup>75</sup> So even when these hashtags are not collectively used, they can be interpreted as signs that has the potential to demand political and social changes by the ways that it can be picked up by others.

### **3.5 Waste as a communitarian and environmental project**

Last March, Fablab<sup>76</sup> UP Cebu launched the project *Precious Plastic* on the University of the Philippines’ campus in Lahug, Cebu City. The project comes from a Dutchman called Dave Hakkens, whose goal is establishing communities that commit to recycling locally in order to minimize people’s generation of waste.<sup>77</sup> Franco, a resident maker at Fablab, saw *Precious Plastic* as an opportunity that is able to address the consequences of plastic pollution, perhaps leading to people starting to talk about it. The project synchronously shows that recycling is possible on a small scale, people learn how recycling works and learn to operate the necessary tools. In these processes, plastics that would normally be disposed in trash bins can be molded into a new design instead (see Figure 8). Moreover, the new design endeavors to counter the ephemeral function of the previous design, this time taking the “environmental fate” into account, while simultaneously bringing processes of production, consumption and disposal together (Thompson 2013:157). Franco spoke optimistically when he told how private businesses are expressing interest in supporting the initiative, since he considered private players as having a higher potential for reaching out to more people.

But even though the project has only been running for three weeks when I spoke to

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<sup>74</sup> Peter. Interview. April 5, 2018.

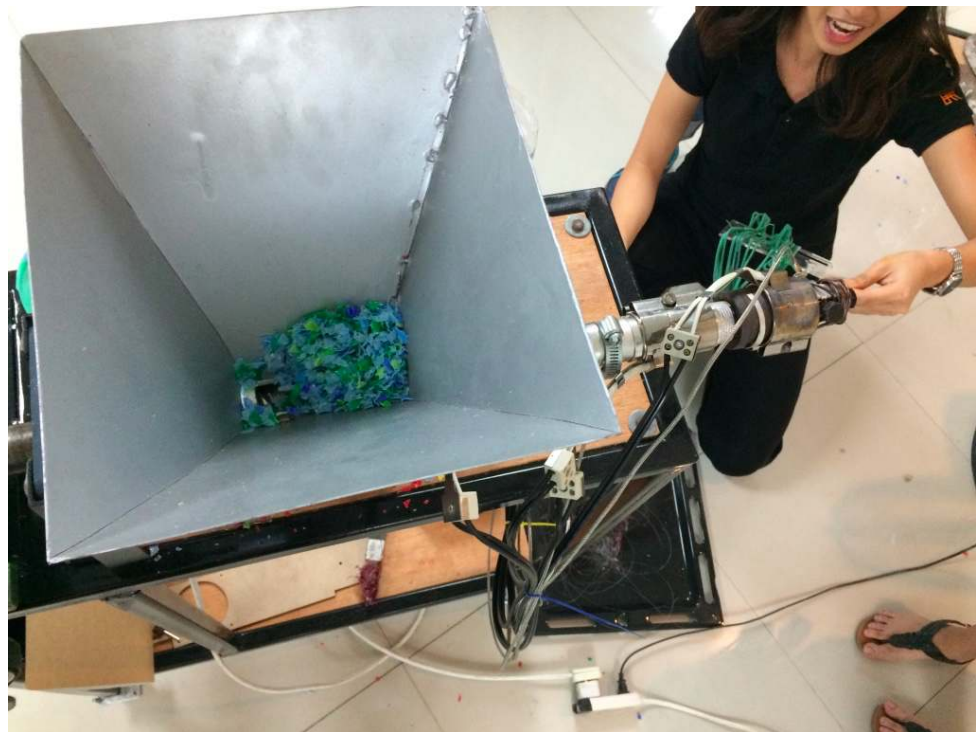
<sup>75</sup> Naomi. Interview. April 30, 2018.

<sup>76</sup> Fablab is a abbreviation for fabrication laboratory. A fab lab concerns a cooperative workshop where people can make use of machines, such as computers, 3D printers, and laser cutters. For more information about Fablab UP Cebu, see: <https://www.up.edu.ph/index.php/cebus-fab-fablab/>.

<sup>77</sup> See <https://preciousplastic.com/>.

Franco, he admitted that it was still a struggle to really establish a community, since there was no fixed number of people coming back to every event. Consequently, the community so far remained “very virtual”. In addition, Franco felt that in the future the designs of the machines need some adjustments in order to be replicated, since the parts they had used were brand new. Brand new parts are not in line with Dave Hakkens’ vision, he said, who would prefer to locally acquire unused items or junk. But it is complicated: some of the heating elements can only be imported from China. Another issue is that the melting of the plastic causes toxic fumes, leading to air pollution and negative health consequences. Moreover, millions of pieces are blown away in the process (Hawkins 2013). To date, the machines are inside a building. It is planned to put the machines outside to minimize the health risks at least. Despite of the polluting effects of recycling, Franco explained that if you do not transform the collected plastic into a new design thus use it as a resource (Moore 2012), it will end up on a landfill or dumpsite, where it will be eventually burned, and therefore will be more or less equally as harmful.<sup>7879</sup> This way, it is a matter of weighing the consequences.

**FIGURE 8:** Shredded plastic gets melted into new forms in the *Precious Plastic* project in Fablab, UP Lahug, Cebu City.



<sup>78</sup> In theory, incinerators can catch or “recover” some of the energy, but in reality, energy recovery systems need to be therefore appropriately regulated (Thompson 2013).

<sup>79</sup> Franco. Interview. April 12, 2018.

## Conclusions



### Wrapping up waste

waste |wāst|

ORIGIN Middle English : from Old Northern French *wast(e)* (noun), *waster* (verb), based on Latin *vastus* ‘*unoccupied, uncultivated*.’<sup>80</sup>

We all deal with waste daily, yet we talk little about it. Whereas other authors have debated about how waste could be defined (Gille 2010; Dillon 2010; Reno 2014; Whitson 2011; O’Brien 1999), my point of departure has been that waste is the *perception* of considering a material as surplus. From there, I have looked at how narratives of modernization affect people’s perceptions and negotiations of meanings of solid waste in Metro Cebu, the Philippines. Using an anthropological approach and participating in the daily lives of the people whom I met, I have intended to show what people believe and how these beliefs give shape to how people act in specific ways in relation to waste. By not merely focusing on Cebu City or on solid waste issues alone, I have attempted to disclose how waste issues are accompanied by other sorts of issues.

In the introduction I opened on a long shot, looking at how waste issues are experienced in several places of the world. Narratives of globalization have contributed to the mobilization of people and governments to consider waste as something that needs management. While on the one hand globalization “is *centripetal* in that it connects people worldwide”, on the other hand “it is *centrifugal* in that it inspires a heightened awareness of, and indeed (re-)constructions of local uniqueness” (Eriksen 2010: 200). That is, while environmental narratives of climate change and disturbed ecosystems tell people that all humans are in the same boat (or on the same planet), they simultaneously make people aware how our experiences differ critically. In conversations about the waste situation in Metro Cebu, several people compared the Philippines with the waste situations in Japan, Singapore, and South-Korea (while remarkably other neighboring countries are not mentioned). These paradoxical processes of globalization go along with narratives of modernization, wherein places are imagined as in need to be clean, ordered and rational (Moore 2009), despite of all the existing, distinct contexts.

Throughout the thesis I have built on narratives of modernization. On the one hand, these narratives cause people to imagine that places and people can be clean, ordered and beautiful

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<sup>80</sup> Oxford Dictionary of English 2013.

after passing certain steps of “progress” (Ferguson 1999; González Stephan 2003; Appadurai 2006; Moore 2009). On the other hand, precisely the imagination what people and countries would be able to achieve through modernization makes it depend on a production system that benefits from repeated and collective habits to throw away and consume again, in which waste production simultaneously grows: and paradoxically, reinforces the threat of people and countries becoming defiled (Moore 2009).

In the Philippines, waste management has become a partial responsibility for citizens. While laws require citizens to dispose waste segregated in trash bins, those from whom is believed that they do not comply are depicted as people who lack discipline. As González Stephan (2003:199) stated how discipline is limited because it can only follow one logic, it is exactly this logic that dictates meanings of citizenship. In pursuance of viewing and maintaining the self as *hinlo*, people in Metro Cebu try to prevent themselves from becoming defiled by performing “civilized” and equating it with “rationality”. Bodies, language, habits, houses, and land; everything can suddenly become a means to negotiate who is superior and who is inferior, and more importantly, who belongs to a place and who does not. With all sorts of flows that enter and leave a place, from colonialism to migration and immigration, meanings of “we” and “they” become blurred (Appadurai 1996). In times of perceived social insecurities, it raises questions who has the right to make use of social services and in this power struggle on the basis of status, rights, and responsibility; in short, on the basis of citizenship (Cresswell 2013; Appadurai 2006; Holston and Appadurai 1996). Fears for the imagined promises of a failing modern place are projected toward a specific group of people (Appadurai 1996). In Metro Cebu, these people are those who are considered to have a *bakya* taste embody what is believed to be “uncivilized”, “uneducated”, “immoral”, “dirty”, or “wild” (Rafael 2000). In other words, such groups represent the fear of what cannot be controlled.

In order to make sense of a place, people use cognitive maps. On the one hand, leisure geographies guide people to visit places where they feel a sense of belonging to. On the other hand, waste geographies remind people of the places where they sense a lack of affinity. Through the stories of people it appears that it is precisely the places where people feel a sense of belonging to are taken care of, which become to be considered as assets of the self. Being *hinlo* does not only apply to personal hygiene, but also to a clean house and place to live in. For those who can afford it, the maintenance of *hinlo* even extends to the use of cars and visiting malls, considering them as clean, ordered and beautiful. These sorts of performances make the distinction between formal and informal bigger and the contrasts validate ideas of that everything outside the cognitive maps of leisure geographies is “unregulated” and “chaotic” (Connell 1997). Waste geographies specify the “unregulated” and “chaotic” more by the justification of neglect of the place. In other words, the places where people’s waste geographies imagine the lack of affinity is where litter becomes condoned. Indeed, these are places where some narratives tell

that those who dwell in there are perceived as citizens with lesser rights and lesser status. As a result, socio-economic inequalities and environmental inequalities reinforce each other.

In the meantime, particularly perceptions of waste as hazard and disorder stimulate some people in forming groups. These groups or initiatives attempt to transform the value of waste in one way or the other. Their attempts have as point of departure that waste is something that needs to be managed to maintain places clean, ordered and beautiful. All initiatives have in common their intention to restructure habits by the ritualization of waste, of which these ritual performances of waste segregation communicate that one is willing to make a sacrifice to be a “responsible” or “disciplined” citizen of Metro Cebu. In other words, the way how one disposes waste is a performance of the self wherein the meaning of being citizen is constructed. Furthermore, these initiatives have the potential to open up possibilities to negotiate meanings of waste on new grounds if they involve people in active participation, yet it is necessary to take into account that an array of interpretations of the notion of citizenship exists which is continuously negotiated. The recognition of different meanings of citizenship and waste may create opportunities to prevent the transformation of meanings of waste from the dichotomizing forces beyond it.

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# NO SEGREGATION ON COLLECTION


BALAOD SA REPUBLIC ACT 9003 UG CITY ORDINANCE 1361 UG 2031

Mga Ginadili: *Effective March 01, 2018*

- Paglabay sa mga basura sa mga publikong lugar.
- Ang dili paglain-lain o pagbahin-bahin sa 4 ka naglain-laing klase sa basura.
- Ginadili ang basura nga makatag 5 metros palibot sa mga paril o koral sa mga balay o "Building"
- Mga lugar patigayonan kinahangian dunay sudlanan sa mga basura ug dili makasamok sa mga tawo nga lumalabay.
- Pagluwa, Pagpangih, Pagkalibang sa publikong lugar.
- Ang Pagpagawas sa basura sa dili pa takdang oras a.scheduled.

### MGA SILOT OG MULTA



**Compromise Fee: P500.00 or COMMUNITY SERVICE**

Usa (1) hangtud unom ka buwan (1-6 months) nga pagkabilanggo depende sa desisyon sa korte. Alang sa mga pangutana o reklamo palihug tawag sa

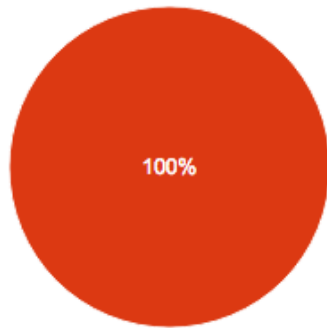
**HOTLINE: Cebu City Environment & Natural Resources Office (CCENRO): 2536362, 2532217**  
 Department of Public Services (DPS): 411-0100 local 3105

SCHEDULE SA PAGLABAY:	DUGANG PAHIBALO:		
<p><b>ADLAW:</b></p> <p>1. MALATA: MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, FRIDAY, SATURDAY</p> <p>2. DILI MALATA: TUESDAY, THURSDAY, SUNDAY</p> <p>3. RESIDUAL: TUESDAY, THURSDAY, SUNDAY (sa sudlanan nga lahi sa Dili Malata)</p> <p>4. SPECIAL WASTE: To be announced</p>	<p><b>ORDINANCE 2343</b> Gidili paggamit ug pagbaligya sa Plastic Shopping bags Matag adlaw nga Myerkules ug Sabado MULTA P 1,000.00</p> <p><b>ORDINANCE 2241 ug E.O. 26</b> Gidili ang pagpanigarilyo sa pang publikong lugar ug sa mga publikong sakyanan MULTA P 2,000.00</p>		
<h3>UPAT (4) KA KLAKE SA BASURA</h3>			
<p><b>(MALATA)</b></p> <p>SALIN SA PAGKAON UTANON DAHON PANIT SA PRUTAS PAPEL TINA-I SA ISDA KARTON</p>	<p><b>(DILI MALATA)</b></p> <p>CANNED GOODS TINIDOR/KUTSARA DILATA BOTELYA STYROFOAM TETRAPACKS PVC</p> <p><b>(PLASTICS)</b></p> <p>GROCERY BAGS DISPOSABLE SPOONS DISPOSABLE CUPS PLASTIC BAGS PLASTIC BOTTLE PLASTIC CONTAINER PLASTIC STRAW</p>	<p><b>(RESIDUAL)</b></p> <p>NAPKINS DIAPERS TRAPO</p>	<p><b>(SPECIAL WASTE)</b></p> <p>BATERIYA SA SAKYANAN BATERIYA SA FLASHLIGHT SOBRA SA PINTAL PONDIDO NGA FLOURESCENT LAMPS UG BOMBELYA GUBA NGA TELEBISYON, COMPUTER RADIO, STEREO SET, VCD/DVD PLAYER REFRIGERATOR</p> <p>WIRES GADGETS CELLPHONES CELLPHONE CHARGER CELLPHONE</p>

APPENDIX II | Results of waste segregation test

Clean plastic bag

10 responses



- Malata
- Dili Malata
- Residuals
- Hazardous Waste
- Other
- I don't know / I am not sure

Dry paper bag

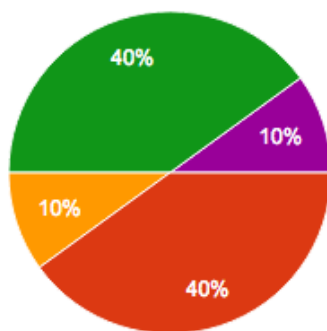
10 responses



- Malata
- Dili Malata
- Residuals
- Hazardous Waste
- Other
- I don't know / I am not sure

Feminine pad

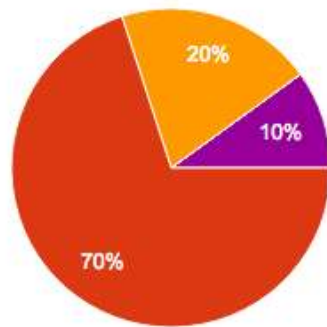
10 responses



- Malata
- Dili Malata
- Residuals
- Hazardous Waste
- Other
- I don't know / I am not sure

## Beer can

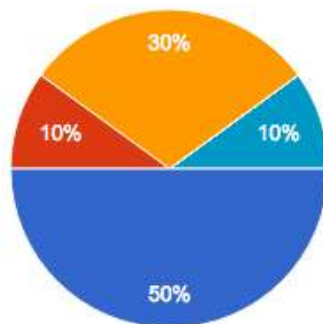
10 responses



- Malata
- Dili Malata
- Residuals
- Hazardous Waste
- Other
- I don't know / I am not sure

## Used pizza box

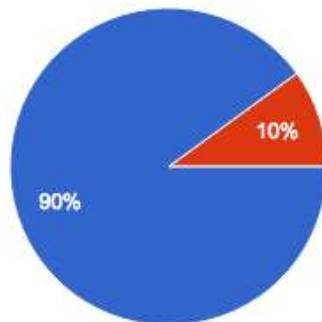
10 responses



- Malata
- Dili Malata
- Residuals
- Hazardous Waste
- Other
- I don't know / I am not sure

## Wooden sticks

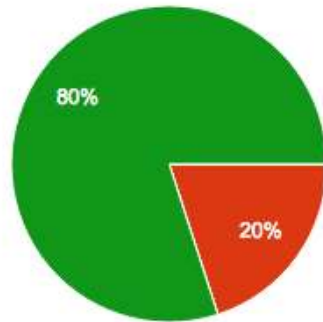
10 responses



- Malata
- Dili Malata
- Residuals
- Hazardous Waste
- Other
- I don't know / I am not sure

## Light bulb

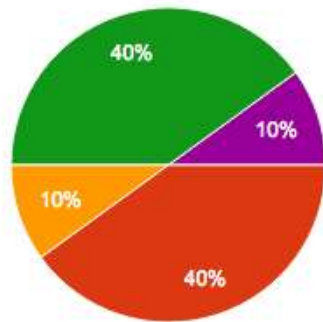
10 responses



- Malata
- Dili Malata
- Residuals
- Hazardous Waste
- Other
- I don't know / I am not sure

## A broken San Miguel beer bottle

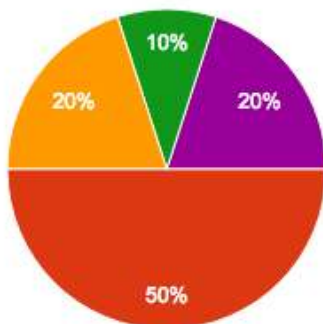
10 responses



- Malata
- Dili Malata
- Residuals
- Hazardous Waste
- Other
- I don't know / I am not sure

## Metal lids

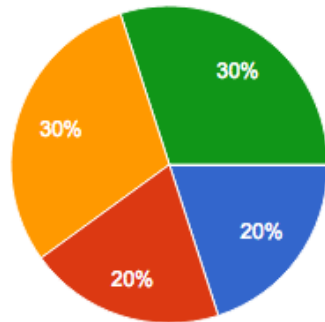
10 responses



- Malata
- Dili Malata
- Residuals
- Hazardous Waste
- Other
- I don't know / I am not sure

## Used napkins

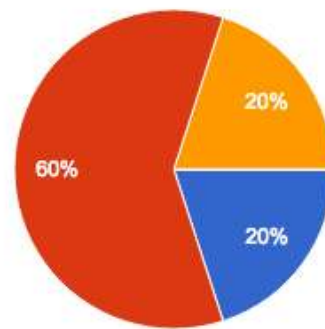
10 responses



- Malata
- Dili Malata
- Residuals
- Hazardous Waste
- Other
- I don't know / I am not sure

## Cigarette butt

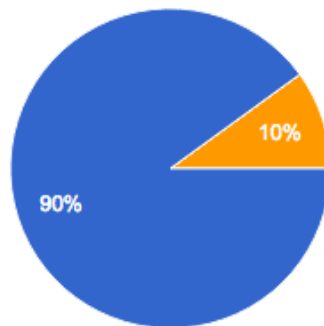
10 responses



- Malata
- Dili Malata
- Residuals
- Hazardous Waste
- Other
- I don't know / I am not sure

## Food leftovers

10 responses

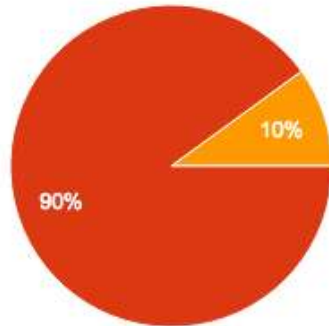


- Malata
- Dili Malata
- Residuals
- Hazardous Waste
- Other
- I don't know / I am not sure



## Styrofoam box

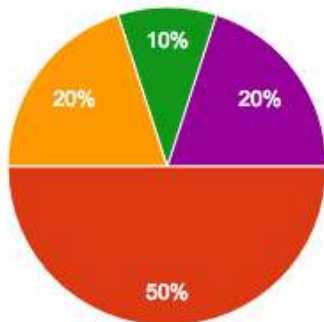
10 responses



- Malata
- Dili Malata
- Residuals
- Hazardous Waste
- Other
- I don't know / I am not sure

## Imported wine bottle

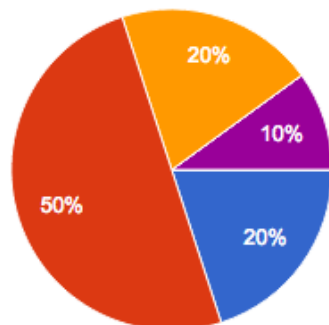
10 responses



- Malata
- Dili Malata
- Residuals
- Hazardous Waste
- Other
- I don't know / I am not sure

## Drinking carton

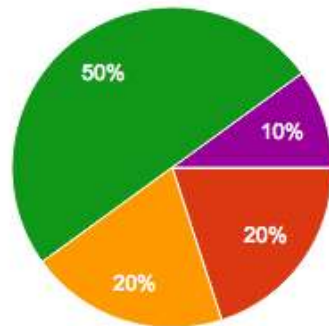
10 responses



- Malata
- Dili Malata
- Residuals
- Hazardous Waste
- Other
- I don't know / I am not sure

## Used diaper

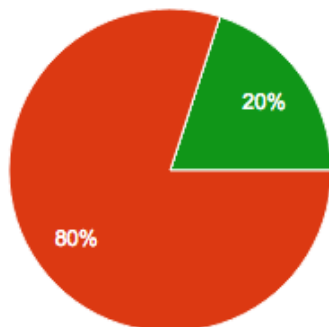
10 responses



- Malata
- Dili Malata
- Residuals
- Hazardous Waste
- Other
- I don't know / I am not sure

## Contaminated plastic found in the sea

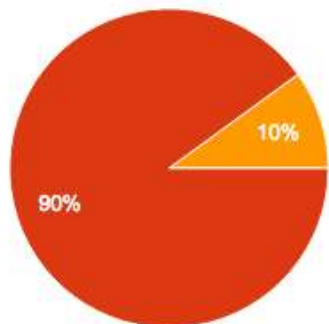
10 responses



- Malata
- Dili Malata
- Residuals
- Hazardous Waste
- Other
- I don't know / I am not sure

## Bag of chips

10 responses

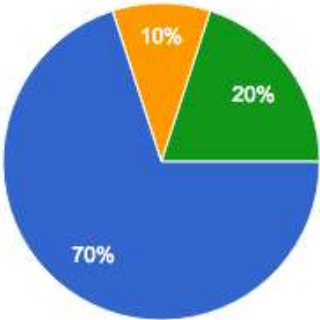


- Malata
- Dili Malata
- Residuals
- Hazardous Waste
- Other
- I don't know / I am not sure



### Used toilet paper / sanitary papers

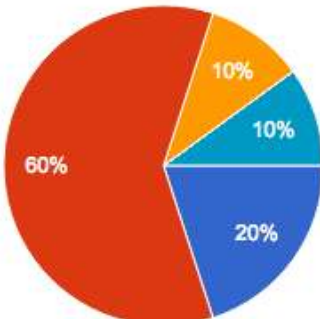
10 responses



- Malata
- Dili Malata
- Residuals
- Hazardous Waste
- Other
- I don't know / I am not sure

### Fruit / vegetable net

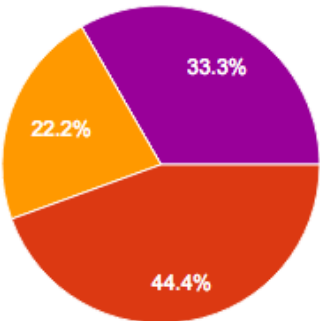
10 responses



- Malata
- Dili Malata
- Residuals
- Hazardous Waste
- Other
- I don't know / I am not sure

### Worn-out shoes

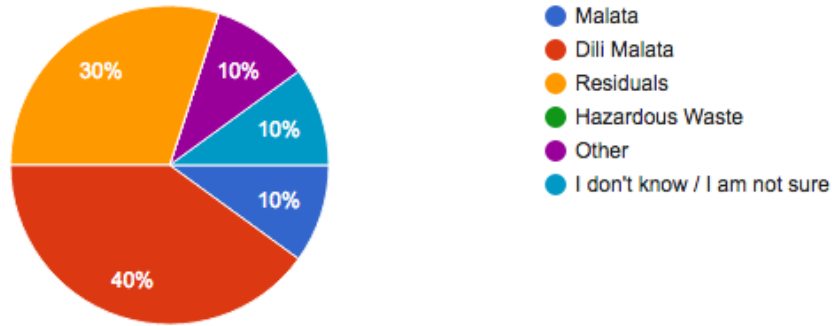
9 responses



- Malata
- Dili Malata
- Residuals
- Hazardous Waste
- Other
- I don't know / I am not sure

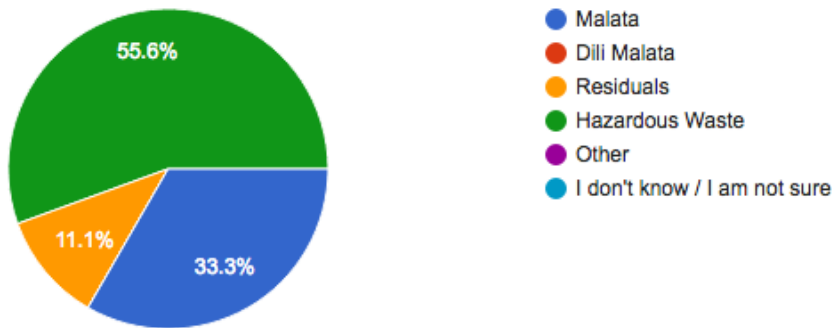
## Worn-out clothes

10 responses



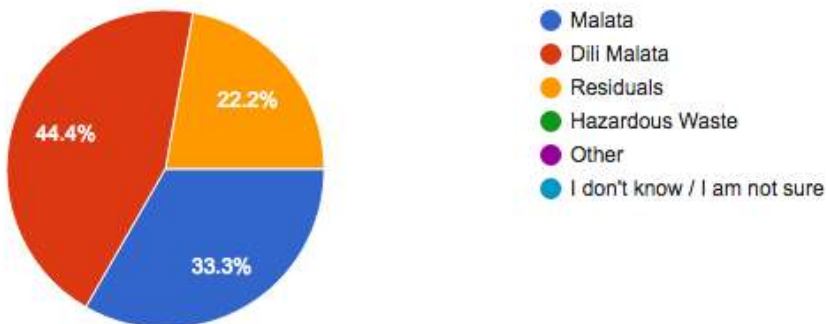
## Umbilical cord

9 responses



## Coffee cup

9 responses



## Worn-out swimming pants

10 responses

