

Women's Space in the Fish Port Tambler Complex and the Value-Chain Nodes of the Fishing Industry in General Santos City, Philippines

RAYMUNDO R. PAVO^{*} and LARRY N. DIGAL

University of the Philippines Mindanao, Mintal, Tugbok District, Davao City 8022, Philippines

Abstract

This study uses ethnography to describe the spaces of women in the Fish Port Tambler Complex of General Santos City, and investigates the points of convergence with and divergence from the value-chain nodes of the tuna fishing industry. As host to a key local industry, this fish port in General Santos City was estimated to generate at least 42,000 jobs in 2014. This landscape of jobs, however, needs to be sex disaggregated and direct observation in the fish port shows the limited spaces that women fill-in and the dominance of male workers in the vicinity. Guided by the standpoint of Henri Lefebvre on social spaces, the results of the present study showed that as women occupied spaces in the fish port complex, they demonstrated their agency and capacities as income earners, as friends to fellow workers, and as allies in the fish marketing processes. Although their spaces were marginal compared to the kind and extent of spaces that men had in the area, and, largely, their spaces did not interface with the conceived formal value chain nodes in the tuna industry, these women did not consider themselves marginalised in the Fish Port Tambler Complex. The ethnographic result of the study, when viewed through the gender lens of Longwe (1991), however, is interpreted either as a manifestation of hope for better livelihood opportunities, or as a call for increased capacities to enable these women to critically see through their current spaces and situations in the fish port complex.

^{*}Corresponding author. Email address: rpavo77@gmail.com

Introduction

General Santos City is called the tuna capital of the Philippines. Tuna is mainly traded and shipped in the General Santos City Fish Port Complex which is the second largest port in the country. 6 of the 7 tuna canneries of the country are located in General Santos City. The canned tuna processing industry in the Philippines is now the second largest processor in the WCPO next to Thailand. The tuna industry generates about USD 300 million annually of exports and 200,000 jobs from direct and indirect employment (Amerkhan 2016). The latter figure is estimated based on the UN-FAO State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture report in 2012 which estimated 3 to 4 related jobs created for every person engaged in capture fisheries in 2010. In General Santos, around 42,000 jobs were directly engaged in tuna fishing in 2014 which translates to more than 200,000 jobs generated.

However, women and fishing ports are an under-investigated topic in relation to others in the Philippines fisheries sector. To date, no recent study on the country's eight regional fish ports has been done in the last 16 years with the exception of Israel and Roque's (2000) unpublished study on the historical development of fishing ports in the Philippines, and Obsioma's (2014) unpublished work on the roles of women in the fish port complex in General Santos City. Analysis of these works, however, reveal that Israel and Roque's work settled with an overview or general descriptors of the main features and structures of the fishing ports in the country, while Obsioma's work did not consider the spatial perspective in its analysis of the roles of women in the fishing port in General Santos. Moreover, the interface between women spaces in the Fish Port Tumbler Complex and the value-chain nodes in the tuna industry in General Santos City is a research project that was yet to be conceptualised and explored.

The Fish Port Tumbler Complex was constructed in 1998 as a regional port (Philippine Fisheries Development Authority, 2016). Along with studies of Asian fish ports (Lee et al. 2008) which focuses on the difference between Western and Asian port perspectives, and maritime anthropology which tilts towards the shipboard lives of fishers and lives in the the fishing industry (Acheson, 1981), the present study seeks to open a unique space of inquiry different from the focus in maritime anthropology and Asian fish port studies.

More to the point, the paper looks into the physical spaces of the fish port complex from the perspective of women's participation, roles and stories in the fish port in General Santos City.

Obsioma's research (2014) inferred the following points which this paper built from. Her work specifically noted that: (1) women's spaces in the fish port are yet to be adequately recognised; (2) the assigned spaces to women are economically marginal; (3) the spaces that women fill-in in the port largely do not interface with the value-chain nodes of the tuna fishing industry in General Santos City; and (4) women, despite the marginal spaces that they occupy, cultivate locales of productivity as they subsist in the disciplinary structures and forces in the fish port as a livelihood space.

Building on these findings, this study will explore: (1) what spaces do women workers in the Fish Port Complex of General Santos City occupy?; (2) how do women workers figure in the value chain nodes of the tuna industry in General Santos City?; and (3) using Lefebvre's (1991, reproduced in 2014, see Lefebvre 2014) perspective and the lens of women's empowerment and gender equality framework of Longwe (1991), why do women continue to subsist in their spaces in the fish port complex?

Methodology

The study is based on field work, field site mapping, key informant interviews, and semi-formal focus group discussions. The combination of these tools provides a qualitative description of the situation and experiences of women as they subsist in the Fish port complex and interface with the value chain nodes in the tuna industry in General Santos City (Blasco & Wardle, 2007).

To help prepare the platform for the analytic section of the research, we will examine 4 ethnographic data sets: (1) description of the spaces and dynamics in the fish port complex, (2) description of women's participation in the various spaces in the port, (3) discussion on the possible overlaps between women's roles in the port and the value-chain nodes of the tuna industry, and (4) description of stories and experiences of women that illustrate the meanings

that women attach to their spaces in the fish port complex of General Santos City.

Field site mapping included drawing the port spaces on-site with input from key informants. Selected key informants also had at least one year's work experience in the port to help ensure the depth of their stories, and focus group discussions were conducted on-site, coupled with semi-formal discussions to allow other women and fish port workers to join in the discussion. In addition to the results of this ethnographic study, secondary data were consulted from published and unpublished research to contextualize women's work in the fishing industry. The results of the ethnographic section are then analyzed using Lefebvre's theory on social space as lived, conceived, and perceived space. In addition, Longwe's reflection on the meaning and implications of occupational sex segregation (1991) to occasion a gender analysis of the spaces of women in the fish port complex will be used.

Results

On Women Workers in Production Areas

Inequitable economic arrangement is a women's and gender issue that subsists in many production areas in the Philippines. This is an intersecting concern in the fields of agriculture, urban and rural factories, small-scale and large-scale mining operations, plantations, fishing industries, and other sectors of work. A common problem that women workers deal with is the lack of representation, and an almost trivial attribution of their contribution to the household, local, and national economies (Philippine Commission on Women, 2015). In mining, for instance, women miners are generally invisible to local government since the term miner is generally understood as referring to a man. While large-scale mining operations thrive, women generally find themselves habitually scouring for traces of gold and other ores through small-scale mining but continuously contributing to the local economy.

In Luisiana, Laguna, women hat weavers construe their work as a domestic task, rather than formal labor, despite the economic contributions to family income and sense of economic security that the weaving provides to the community (Dungo 2005). In other agricultural sectors, some women are

starting to blur the categorical distinction between home and productive work. But women are still pulled by the cultural expectation to prioritise household chores over paid work (Dungo 2005). In this respect, socio-cultural expectations and economic arrangements still tilt in favour of the interests of male workers while industries remain sceptical of the worth or value of women's productive work.

Unequal division of labor by gender is also found in the fishing industry (FAO 2013). In particular women's significant contributions are overlooked (Obsioma, unpubl. data, 2014). The misrepresentation of women's contribution in the local and national economy leads to a lack of support for women fisheries workers to improve their working conditions (Demmke, 2006, Kleiber, 2014). Despite the positive contributions of women workers through various economic activities, the following question is in order: why do women's productive efforts and capacities remain inadequately recognized?

Women's work is often reduced to the private-household or domestic space. In a globalized setting where the boundaries of production continuously expand, and where productive work is no longer confined to traditional public realms (Banez-Sumagaysay, 2003), private spaces, which are often referred to as the household are no longer delineated from the public spaces. In a globalized setting, the reproductive household space needs to be acknowledged as space where women produce and re-produce, and where women work and get paid.

In the fishing industry, the blurring of boundaries and spaces in the Asia-Pacific also emerged through women's creative entrepreneurial efforts. For example, in the Pacific women have introduced new tuna products in the tuna-based industry (Demmke, 2006). These contributions change the economic image of women as low skilled workers. Social institutions must re-think the way women are construed in the economic landscape.

Despite such feats, the challenge, however, persists as the number of studies on women's participation in various production areas reveal disproportionate programs to help change inequitable structures and biases against women (Kleiber, 2014). This means that the opportunity to re-think situations, and women's work remain needing attention and interventions

(Banez-Sumagaysay, 2003). Inspired by women's capacity to challenge the ill-regard for women's work, the continuing challenge is to give credit and accord support where it is due: to women's creative and productive gifts and capacities in economic-livelihood spaces.

On Women Workers in the Tuna Industry

The inequitable economic arrangement that favours men over women is present in the tuna industry. A study conducted by Obsioma (unpubl. data, 2014), identified the spaces and economic positions that women hold in the following value-chain nodes of the tuna industry in General Santos City: (a) hand-line fishers; (b) purse-seine fishers; (c) tuna cannery workers; and (d) local processing companies. These spaces are less rewarding given the issues that women workers have to deal with: (a) occupational hazards; (b) in case of contracted work, below minimum salaries with no overtime differential payment schemes; (c) uncertainties with regard to security of work due to contractualization; (d) absence of security against sexual harassment and discrimination; and (e) lack of better job opportunities, since work assigned to women mostly requires low level skills with corresponding low range salaries. An initial look at the work issues of women at the fish port in General Santos City reveal the tuna industry's marginal treatment of women in its economic landscape.

A possible reason for the marginalization is the industry's exclusion of women in its economic agenda. In a study on women in the fisheries sector of the Pacific Islands, Demmke (2006) identified the following restrictions that limit women's economic choices: (a) socio-cultural beliefs; (b) family obligations; (c) lack of skills and experiences; (d) lack of direct access to credit and finances; (e) transport restrictions; and (f) poor market facilities. Some of these constraints are also re-affirmed in Obsioma's study (2014): (a) socio-cultural norms; (b) hostile working environment in the Fish port complex; (c) lack of gender awareness programs and policies in the fish port; (d) hazardous working environment in canneries; and (e) lack of skills and experience. Between Demmke and Obsioma, the commonalities with regard to restricting conditions suggest that women's development is yet to be mainstreamed in the economic agenda of the tuna industries.

On Value Chain Nodes

The values chain nodes reflect the complex processes where value is created and added in a series of activities. In the tuna industry of General Santos City, its key value chain nodes pertain to the following 3 main sections or units: inputs, production, marketing, which includes the roles of *jambolero* (a form of broker described below), broker, and/or labourer, traders/wholesalers, exporters, canneries, processors, retailers, and consumers-canned/fresh. Here is a description of these nodes:

An input supplier is a major player in the value chain spectrum and these include ice plants and the financiers for the fishing operation. Ice is a primary supply used during fishing trips and in transporting fish to provinces and cities. There are 3 ice plants within the General Santos Fish Port that supply ice to fishing vessels and trucks that bring fish to other areas in Mindanao. Financiers are equally important actors in the chain, since most boat operators require large amounts of capital during fishing trips. Depending on the size of the fishing vessel, the amount needed by boat operators range between Php 2,500 – Php 6,000 for small scale fisher folks, Php 400,000 – Php 800,000 for medium hand line fishing operations, and around Php 6,000,000 for purse-seine fishing operation. Financiers for fishing operations are mostly male rather than female.

For production, the 3 types of fishing methods used for harvesting tuna in the Philippines are purse-seine, ring net, and hand line (Barut and Garvilles, 2005). Purse-seine and ring net vessels belong to the commercial sector; while hand line vessels are part of both the commercial and small-scale sectors. Purse-seine and ring net use large nets that target skipjack tuna for canning and for the fresh domestic market. Hand line vessels catch large fish such as yellowfin, bigeye, albacore and blue marlin which are intended for domestic and export markets. People involved in fishing operations include the boat captain or skipper, the mechanic, and the fishers. Personnel involved in fishing are all men. Based on a survey conducted in General Santos Fish Port by the UP Mindanao Tuna project, no females were allowed to board. The explanation given for this exclusion is that the work is rigorous, and there is concern about sexual harassment during the 7 to 25 day duration of a single fishing trip.

Fish are unloaded at the General Santos Fish Port (GSFP), the major tuna unloading port in the Philippines (Barut and Garvilles, 2005), particularly in markets II and III for purse-seine vessels and market I and II for hand line vessels. As a key fishing port, the GSFP also provides post-harvest infrastructure for both commercial and small-scale fisher folk. The actors also involved in post-harvest are labourers. Labourers unload and haul fish from fishing vessels for weighing, sorting or classifying. The labourers for such kinds of work are all men who carry big tuna with weight ranging from 15 – 50 kilograms and *banyeras* (tubs) full of fish weighing around 27 kgs.

Marketing includes sorters, classifiers, checkers, *jamboleros*, traders/wholesalers, exporters, processors, and retailers. Sorters are mostly women who sort smaller fish according to size. This task does not require strength. Classifiers grade large tuna for export by using a metal tube that is inserted in the tuna to extract a meat sample. This occupation is male dominated since most of them were previous workers in processing plants and were trained for 3-6 months. Such backgrounds provide men with more experience in handling raw tuna, which men can use in assessing the quality of tuna. Checkers record the number, weight and quality of large tuna, and monitor the number of *banyeras* that were unloaded from the fishing vessel. They are also in charge in monitoring the prices and sales. For this task, women are mostly hired by companies, since women are also less likely to fight with other workers. *Jamboleros* function as the middlemen between the traders and buyers. They negotiate with the traders, and sell the fish to domestic buyers. Men and women are *jamboleros*, but in most cases they are men. There are instances wherein both a husband and a wife are *jamboleros* who alternate working at the fish port. Traders-wholesalers are individuals or company representatives who lease a space in the landing areas in the fish port complex. In these spaces fish are unloaded, sorted, classified, and checked. *Jamboleros* also buy fish from them. Exporters, who are usually male, are situated in market I and buy larger fish such as yellowfin tuna, albacore, blue marlin, etc. for export. They buy class A and B quality fish and ship the whole fish minus the head, tail and gut for export. For export, however, only class A fish are transported, and class B fish are sold domestically. Canneries are owned by large companies that process and pack for export. Canneries use smaller skipjack tuna for canning. The majority of the workers in canneries are women who work on the assembly line. Other processors in General Santos city

produce frozen cuts. There are mainly men hired for frozen cuts processing, rather than women, because men are assumed to have the strength required for cutting large tuna. Some processors also manufacture value-added tuna products such as *chorizo* (in sausage form), *embutido* (processed luncheon meat form), and nuggets. These processors are usually micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and hire more women than men. Tasks of these women include loining, slicing, skinning, and packing which usually do not require great physical strength. Retailers are usually found in the wet market section and sell fish by kilogram. They buy fish from truckers and traders. Some retailers perform other functions such as cleaning and slicing. Both men and women do the same tasks in retailing. In terms of numbers, more women are seen retailing since their husbands/partners are the ones responsible for buying the fish from the fish port. This differentiation in tasks, however, needs further study to determine the contextual reasons for such unfolding.

In the fish port complex, the value chain nodes that are physically or tangibly worked out within the premises of the port include: inputs, production, marketing, traders/wholesalers, and canneries/processors. In addition, the exporters, retailers, and consumers are usually located outside the port, since these actors and processes build-on the activities within the fish port complex. Retailers and exporters, for instance, do not have direct access to the quality of tuna in the port as it is tested by the *jambolero* but simply rely upon the information of their contact.

Theoretical Framework

In “Production of Space”, Lefebvre (2014) distinguishes 3 kinds of social space: spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space.

For spatial practice Lefebvre holds that “The spatial practice of a society secretes that society’s space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical¹ interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it. From the analytic standpoint, the spatial practice of a society is revealed through the deciphering of its space” (Lefebvre 2014). He adds that the space of

¹ Dialectical is defined as “a method of examining and discussing opposing ideas in order to find the truth” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

social relations, given its gradual accretion and appropriation, has a cohesive nature although it does not necessarily follow that such relations subsist as coherent forms, for instance, inequitable modes of production (Lefebvre 2014). The concept's accretion and appropriation, however, may have misleading tones when not understood against Lefebvre's notion of dialectics, which underscores the "bringing together of the conflictual and contradictory, and the linking to theory and practice" (Lefebvre, 1996). Lefebvre values the open-ended movement of the dialectics which can be fragmented, on-going, and in transit (Lefebvre 2014).

Representation of space, meanwhile, is characterized by Lefebvre (2014) as a "conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocrat subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent – all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived." The philosopher adds that space as conceived tends to be verbally articulated in signs which have been long thought of or worked out on an intellectual, rather than emotional level. As a conceived space, this pertains to the way privileged posts and vantage points influence the way spaces are determined. An architect, for example, has the capacity to influence the kind of buildings which shall be built around the city and in turn, contribute to the ethos of the city. If architects underscore the restoration of old buildings, ensuing built structures in the city will eventually create a nostalgic, contextual, and historic feel to its milieu.

For representational space, Lefebvre (2014) reckons that this social space leans towards "coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs". He further specifies that representational space is "space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users', but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who describe and aspire to do no more than describe." Coming from a symbolic stance, this kind of space highlights the lived meanings of a society which acquires a value and commands a set of meanings through time. For instance, Bisaya farmers and Lumad farmers, different ethnic groups in Mindanao who are immigrant and ancestral peoples, respectively, will have unique symbolic appropriations of the land that they till. The Lumad farmer often connects his farming to his ancestors who paved the way for the activity to subsist until the present times. This appreciation of the network of meanings

that subsist and regulate the way farms and lands are lived and experienced point to the overflow of meanings that hover and condition traditional farming systems. For the Bisaya settler who went into farming, the non-articulated meanings of the land and farming as a communal activity may be approached simply as arbitrary constructs and as constraints to the Bisaya's understanding and appreciation of the symbolic value of land, farming and the community in an indigenous farming community (Pavo, unpubl data, 2014).

Since the present study privileges the spaces and experiences of women, it is also conceptually hinged on Longwe's (1991) welfare, access, conscientization, participation and control (WACPC) framework of empowerment, which serves as a standard against which the occupational sex segregation in the fish port complex is assessed. Given that this framework underscores the connection between gendered experiences and the socio-political world, it also looks into how gendered constraints, especially on women, are magnified given assumed and unrecognized dispositions towards women. As a gender analytic frame, it is also important to note that such concepts may be considered within the purview of a feminist standpoint epistemology as Longwe's (1991) interrogations demonstrate how women regard and value their spaces, experiences and questions differently from men. Also, reminiscent of Foucault's (1967) understanding of power, the discussions of Longwe (1991) are reminders of the intricate relation between contexts of women, sites of domination and locales of opportunities to articulate agency and resistance. This is a line of thought which also helps theoretically situate this paper's description of locales of women's agency and power as they subsist in women's spaces in the fish port complex.

Ethnographic Data 1: Women Space in Markets I and II

Market I. Where do women figure in market I? At first glance, the location suggests that it is a male-dominated space. Starting with the shipping vessels, one can see male fishers resting or going about their house keeping tasks, and male labourers transporting the tuna catch to the display area in market I. Also, a few male *jamboleros* stand near the *tarima* (display area) with their testers (aluminum rod-sticks), which they use to check the quality of tuna meat. Amongst the *jamboleros*, we only saw one female *jambolero*, distinguished by the tester that she was carrying. Unlike her male counterpart,

she, however, did not use her stick to scrape-off tuna meat but simply waited for the assessment of the tuna meat by a male *jambolero*. From an observer's point of view, such a difference in action may mean that the woman *jambolero* has hesitations in assessing the tuna using her stick, or she may feel that she is not in a position to make an assessment when there are men already doing the meat evaluation.

In our interview, the informant shared that she is a *jambolero* and started taking part in the work in 2006. She further specified that she actually works in the port as *jambolero* alongside her husband. As a *jambolero*, she explained that her primary task is to check the quality of the tuna which she will deliver to her clients in various parts of Mindanao. She added that her products reach as far as Davao City. With regard to her relation with her clients, we asked if the goods, once delivered, are paid in cash. "*Dili pwede utang*" (Credit is not possible) was how she answered the query. She noted that her clients are good payers, however; and she acknowledges the need to take extra care of them by assuring the quality of tuna that she delivers. In market I, they also rented out a canopy with 3 big *icabakan* (containers). But she specified that the tuna they have bought from market I do not really last long in the containers as there is a big demand for tuna in many parts in Mindanao.

Just in front of market I, 3 women also gathered, squatting while waiting for something or somebody from the shipping vessel. We approached them with a sense of hesitation, since we were unsure if they were the wives of the fishermen. So, initially we inquired as to why they were stationed in the docking area of market I. One woman replied that they were there waiting for an instruction from the boat's captain, or operator if they will be allowed to go on board the shipping vessel. She continued that after the unloading of large size tuna, it is possible to find some skipjack left inside the vessel. These fish are about 2 to 4 kilos, which the women can buy from the operator and sell in market II. After such a remark, we asked them if they were *jamboleros*. Her companion uttered this line: "*Small-time lang man ni amua kung naay nadakpan nga gagmay lang nga isda*" (Our venture here is small-scale, which only concerns small fish). Although they were not keen in identifying themselves as *jamboleros*, their descriptions of their space and intent in market I actually interface with how *jamboleros* work in this market – reserve fish, add price, and transport the fish to another location for selling. Unfortunately, we

did not see this process reach fruition because the 3 women decided to leave the port of market I, once the operator announced that there were no skipjack in the “Pak-an”. Hence, the 3 women, after looking at their cell phones, explained that they needed to go home and attend to some domestic chores in the household. One of them, however, added that they have been doing these jobs for the past ten years, and frequent the port of market I about 5 times a week.

Given the interviews with women, their narratives reveal two types of women *jamboleros*: large-scale, and small-scale. While the former confined herself to tuna which is at least 30 kilos, the latter confined her interest to smaller sized tuna which are around 2 to 3 kilos. The disproportion in size is also consistent with the trajectory of the transportation of the tuna. While the first type of *jambolero* ferries the tuna to cities within or outside General Santos City, the small-scale *jambolero* sells the fish to market II, which is a few meters away from market I. The difference in money involved between the 2 kinds of *jambolero* may also be imagined from the kinds of negotiations involved between the first type of female *jambolero* and the 3 women. But in both instances, the term *jambolero* is explained by the informants as “*mag-jamble o magpatung-patung*” (to *jamble* or add price and gamble). Another mentioned the term *panipis* (to make thin), “*kay laway ang puhunan*” (one only needs to make use of one’s saliva when negotiating prices). With such descriptions, *jambolero* as a term appears to pertain to acts and the art of negotiating between the interest of the operators of fishing vessels, and the *jambolero*’s role of delivering quality tuna to clients or retailers as in the case of the large scale *jamboleros*, and prospective customers/buyers within market II as in the case of the small scale *jamboleros*.

In addition to the *jamboleros*, women checkers also figure in market I. Their tasks revolve around these concerns: record the number of tuna on display in a bay/area; also record the weight per tuna; and cross-check with the *jamboleros* the number of tuna that have been transferred to their container bins, or trucks. As checkers, it is important to specify that they work as the port’s administrative staff. This is to distinguish them from the checkers which *jamboleros* may sometimes hire to assist them in tracking their reservations. When a male labourer was asked, “why do women work as checkers in market I?”, he retorted that the task is light, and it does not require physical labour, which he considers apt for women. The female checker, upon hearing such a

remark, did not make any fuss with the given statement. She agreed and even added that the physical demand of transporting large size tuna would be dangerous to women's health.

In an adjacent corner, we spotted a woman gathering entrails from a "*bagan*" (blue marlin), which she said is sold at 10 pesos per piece. The woman added that the internal organ is processed into a "*dayuk*" – a fermented version of the organ, which can be sold at 35 pesos per bottle in the market. We then asked if other women also gather entrails or organs which are then converted into other products. She expressed that it all depends on the quantity of blue marlin caught. At some point, some of her friends join her to check if other edible entrails or organs are available, which they can also sell in market II. Given that we only saw women demonstrating their interest for entrails, this question was soon asked: Do men engage in this kind of transaction? The informant explained that it is usually women who look for organs which are bought and processed. Her answer, while not directly answering the question, somehow gave the impression that men's roles in market I are usually well-defined, which also means that unexplored roles and spaces in the fish port can serve as avenues for other women to discover or develop income generating activities and transactions in the spaces of market I.

Market II is busier than market I and its modes of transaction and labour are more varied. In addition to the male labourers, market II features female sorters. As the male labourers transfer and unload baskets of fish to an "*ayagan*", a group of women begin the cycle of segregating fish according to kind and quality. As sorters, they need to be swift in their judgment in deciding which fish goes to what tub. A quick look at the baskets beneath the "*ayagan*" showed how fast such tubs were filled. From an entrepreneur's perspective, the segregation process appeared crucial – as an informant explained, since it determined the price of the fish. The price, which the scaler announced, was information which *jamboleros* awaited and relayed to their retailers.

We also interviewed a female checker in the area and asked if sorting was exclusive to women. She said: "*ga-an na sya nga trabaho, ang sa lalaki kay bug-at*" (such work is light unlike men who need to lift heavy things). "*Mas metikuloso pud ang babae kaysa lalake*" (also, women are more attentive to details than men). This was another reason why women were assigned to such

tasks, according to the checker. Upon encountering a checker who was taking a short break from her work, we inquired about the prices that were usually pegged per tub. She said that for good quality fish, the cost was Php 3,900.00; if the set of fish was slightly bruised, a tub was sold for Php 2,500.00. “*Pero kung lata na ang isda*” (If the fish is already deformed), “*ang presyo kay Php 1-1,200.00 kada tub.*” (the price is between Php 1-1,200.00). When asked further why some fish become highly deformed, the informant explained: “*kana nga isda ang nasa ubos sa pukot, ug sa sulod sa lantsa sa pila na ka-adlaw*” (such fish are those that are at the bottom of the fishing net, and have been stored inside the fishing boat for days).

With regard to sorting, we also observed that women used their bare hands, and that they needed to stand for hours continuously, waiting until the last catch has been sorted. Was it better if women used gloves as protection from sharp and spiky fish parts while sorting? The checker clarified that it entirely depended on the person. In some cases, sorters used gloves, while others preferred to sort with their bare hands. A woman sorter also shared that she once tried using gloves, but she eventually decided to dispose of them, since she felt that it became difficult to get a good grip, and hence made the sorting process more laborious. She added that since speed was a factor in sorting, some just proceeded in their tasks, not minding the discomfort, and at times pain, that they felt with their hands.

Upon noticing a woman taking charge of the display of bread, we also inquired if she was a sorter and was maintaining a small business stall in the port for additional income. The enlister clarified that the bread on display was from Makalipay bakery, the owner-renter of the bay-space which we were observing in the port. The enlister was quick to add that they were not allowed to sell other goods in the place. The selling of bread was part of the owner’s way of assisting the labourers so they needed not go to the cafeteria of the port, which was about 20 m from their working station. While the unloading and sorting of fish continued, some labourers also availed of the bread and paid five pesos for each piece.

We also asked about the educational backgrounds of the labourers and sorters. The checker of Makalipay Fishing Bay narrated that except for one labourer, everyone in the group was either a high school graduate or a college

level student. The only labourer who finished a degree in education, however, failed in the licensure exam for teachers (LET) 3 times. Given their educational backgrounds, we prompted the enlister with this question: “how much do these workers earn each month?” She described this payment scheme: from the net income of the monthly transactions in the fish port, the labourers would divide among themselves the 3 % profit while the 97 % would go to the owner who would then allocate an amount for the next fishing expedition. For this company, the enlister said that there were 70 of them working as labourers, sorters, and checkers. From the 3 %, a male labourer usually gets around Php 7,500.00 while the female sorters received an estimated Php 5,000.00. The question that followed centered on the differences in payments. The enlister reiterated the point that the work of male labourers was more physically demanding than sorting. The female workers in the area who listened to the remark agreed with it.

After the interview with this respondent, we also discovered a group of old women selling fish just beside the delivery and sorting area of the port. These women had their small table where small fish on display, a chair, and two to three small ice boxes. Intrigued by their presence, we inquired if they were actually allowed by the port’s administration to sell fish within the port’s premises. The informant shared that she has been selling in the same space for the past ten years. She replied: “*gitagaan mi ug pwesto*,” (these spaces were given to us by the administration). “*Naa pud koy I.D.*” (I also have an I.D.). She added that she pays Php 1,000.00 for the annual renewal of her I.D. The informant also specified that she typically began selling fish in her space at 8:30 a.m. and continued until 11:30 a.m. After these hours, she would pack her things and ensure that her area was clean. She then stored her tables, chairs, and ice boxes in a nearby section. When asked where her fish display came from, the informant said that it was from the fish landings delivered to the port. Usually, her contacts would inform her of some excess catch, which could still be sold.

Ethnographic Data II: Fish Port as Market Place – Its Meaning for Women

How do women construe markets I and II, in the fish port complex? Through semi-formal small-group focus discussions, 2 small groups of women shared how women figure in the markets, and what the markets in the port mean

to them. Women, according to the participants in a semi-focus group discussion, worked in the port as: tub holder/checkers, sorters, checkers, cashiers, vendors, *jamboleros*, canners and operators.

“Tub checkers” traced the whereabouts of tubs and conducted the daily inventories of the number of tubs available. The informants mentioned that each tub costs around Php 450.00. This price explains why tub checking has to be one of the tasks in the port, especially when a large number of fishing vessels unload their fish in market II.

“Sorters” segregate the kinds and quality of fishes. Usually, 3 categories were used: high quality, medium quality and low quality. The prices were proportional to the kind and quality. This type of sorting was peculiar to market II, since the kind of sorting that was operative in market I took on a different form. In market I, classifying the kind of tuna meat was done either through “*tusok*”, or “*laras*”. “*Tusok*” means that the broker and/or classifier extracted a flesh sample to test the quality of the meat. For this classification type, tuna meat was sold at Php 360.00 kg⁻¹. For “*laras*”, the tuna meat’s quality was not tested and the price was set for the barrel or tub as Php 250.00 kg⁻¹. Between the 2 types of sorting, women performed the first round of sorting in markets I and II, while a few women engaged in sorting as *laras* in market I.

“Checkers” oversaw the number of tuna on display per aisle or Bay in market I, or the number of trays while taking note of the price per tray per Bay in market II. Also known as enumerators, they were contractual employees of the port in the case of market I but were organic members of a Bay in the case of market II. This is why in market II, the checker also saw to it that the actors in each Bay were performing according to their expected functions. “Cashiers” informed the *jambolero* of the price of the fish per tub in the case of market II. In market I, however, there was no visible cashier since payments were made either through checks or the bank. In market II, the cashier also kept a record of the number of tubs, and the payments made. “Vendors” in market I created a cell phone loading center, which was signaled by posting like this: “available load here, all networks, contact Mae”. In market II, there were bread vendors as well as fish vendors.

“*Jambolero*” sold tuna fish per kilo to local wholesalers or local market retailers, adding a price premium. The informants specified that usually the

jambolero followed the price set by the classifier, as in the case of market I, and the cashier, as in the case of market II. When asked if the *jambolero* could change the price range set by the classifier, the group pointed out that the price range needed to be upheld or observed. A *jambolero* also frequented the Bays/Areas to find cheaper rates. *Bahis-bahis* was a term that pertained to the *jambolero*'s need to frequently walk around in search of more favourable price arrangements in the port.

Women also worked in the canning of tuna in a nearby facility. When asked if they also hoped to work inside the canning facility, the marketplace participants retorted that it was better to work inside the market for these reasons: “*mas hayahay sa gawas*” (it is more relaxing to work in the market than inside a plant/facility); “*walay mubadlong*” (no one will reprimand); “*makagawas-gawas*” (from time to time, one can take a breather by going out of the market space); “*merienda*” anytime (one can eat food/snacks anytime); and “*mas okay sa gawas kay sige naay mubantay sa sulod*” (inspectors frequent the canning facility and its activities, hence it is better to work outside).

Interestingly, the semi-focus group discussion did not include women operators in the list of work and functions that women do in the port. The interview with an operator, however, provided some details of an operator's work, namely: as owner of the boat and/or as financier of a fishing venture, the task was to ensure that the boat's engines were in good condition, and to bring the fish to a Bay/Area where the price was fair and good. In the case of the informant, she cited the Bay of Eiambao or Diego Scaler. This was actually the first Bay in market II or the Bay nearest to the cooperative canteen of the port for employees. The informant specified that Diego Scaler, at the time of interview, valued a kilo of skipjack at Php 60.00, wherein Php 58.00 went to the operator, while Php 2.00 was the income of the scaler.

Following exploring the tasks and functions performed by women in markets I, and II, the next part of the small group discussion focused on the meaning of the market for women. The conversation revolved around these key points: the market as a source of income; (2) a productive place; (3) “*kun asa libre ang isda*” (a place where fish can be freely acquired); (4) as a family of friends; and (5) “*alalay sa bana*” (as a form of assistance to their husbands).

As a source of income, the informants specified that the markets in the port could provide money to support their daily expenses, “*pamasahe*” (fares), and “*pang-eskwela*” (tuition for their kids’ education). This was why one informant said, “*makabuhi ang trabaho diri labi na nga single parent ko*” (work in the market can support our expenses especially as a single parent). This was why the market was also construed as productive. The participants clarified that: “*naa steady income diri, ug dili mahutdan o mawad-an kay adlaw-adlaw naay habwa ug isda gikan sa bangka*” (there is steady income in the market given that, every day, fishing vessels unload their catch). This is perhaps the reason why the market was reckoned as a productive space given a certain assurance that fish abounded and fishing vessels would always have something to unload in the market areas. When asked if they were worried that the count of fish would eventually dwindle, the group said that such a possibility was something which they should not yet agonize about. In relation to construing the market as a productive space, the discussion also reached the idea that the market was a space where one could get free fish, hence free food: “*Naa gyud miy gamay nga isda nga mauli sa amo pamilya*” (we are almost always certain that we can bring home fish, hence, provide food for our families).

In addition to the economic gains and a sense of food security, the market was also considered as space to gain new friends and a sense of family. The participants used these words to describe this point: “*pahalabilo*” (socialization), friendship, “*dili na maulaw*” (no longer shy to socialize), and unity. With these descriptions, the informants magnified the importance of eventually being able to find a group of persons with whom one could share certain experiences.

Lastly, the market, with the economic and social opportunities that it carried, was construed by the women as a way of assisting their husbands in providing food and money to the family. As a participant specified: “*kung ang bana lang kay kulang, dapat duha gyud*” (if the husband is the sole source of income, money will never be sufficient, hence both husband and wife should work). In this case, the group also took pride in their capacity to be of help to their families despite the stress that they experienced while working in the markets: “*naa may income maskin stress.*” With the following constructions of the markets, the discussion ended with the claim that the market had always been of help and assistance to their families. And given such narratives, the

participants in the semi-formal focus group discussion reiterated the point that the family remained the primary reason why women worked in the market, looked forward to a day's work, and braved the difficulties that may unfold in the spaces of markets I and II.

Analysis of Ethnographic Data

Women Space and Value-Chain Nodes Intersect

Given the complex layers of the value-chain nodes in the tuna fishing industry, the spaces that women occupied and the functions that they performed in the fish port intersected on a few nodes (Table 1).

Table 1. Intersecting nodes of port functions

	MARKET I	MARKET II
Women's spaces/functions intersecting with the Value-Chain Nodes	Operator of a Company <i>Jambolero</i>	Individual Operator <i>Jambolero</i>
Women's spaces/functions that do not intersect with the Value-Chain Nodes	1. Checker 1 (as port's administrative staff) 2. Checker 2 (as enlister of the <i>Jambolero</i>) 3. Collector of Fish Entrails (<i>magdadayuk</i>) 4. Sun/Globe/Smart Cell phone loader	1. Tub Holder/Checker 2. Checker 2 (as enlister of the <i>Jambolero</i>) 3. Cashier 4. Fish Vendor 5. Sorter 6. In-charge of bread vending 7. Port Staff
Potential Unrecognized Value-Chain Node	Collector of Fish Entrails which is transformed into <i>Dayuk</i>	

The areas where women's space interfaced with the value chain nodes can also be gleaned through the maps of markets I, and II, of the fish port complex. These intersections are as follows:

Women's space interfaces with the activities and functions of fishing vessels such as "*Unay*" (mother boat), "*Pak-an*" (unmotorised carrier boat) and "*Pumpbot*" (pump boat) either as operators of a company or as an individual operator. Does this description contradict the previously held observation that women do not interface with fishing vessels given that the fish port is regulated by the myth that women bring bad luck to fishing ventures, and that women

may also not be physically apt to survive in fishing expeditions? Given this query, it is important to note that the perceived physical limitations of women workers in the fish port complex rather points to the economic difficulties experienced by many women, rather than on the physical differences between men and women.

What the cases of the overlap in the study reveal, however, is that women's space only interfaces with the value-chain nodes in the tuna industry of General Santos City as operators of a fishing vessel and as *jamboleros* since people in these nodes have economic capabilities, while many of the other spaces that women occupy in the fish port complex are considered as marginal to the value-adding opportunities in the tuna industry.

Discussion

Women's Space and Lefebvre

Using Lefebvre's (2014) notion of space, women's space in the fish port complex can be regarded as intersect of space as lived, perceived, and conceived. These are some of the key analytic points of the dynamics in the fish port complex through Lefebvre's point of view:

Built according to the conceived plan of the port's engineers and architects, the notion of the value-chain nodes may also be regarded as part of the conceived space. This means that the value-chain process is a category which is not organic to the cognitive map of the women informants. As a category, it may belong to the planners of the port who imagined and constructed the port to facilitate the processes in the value-chain spectrum. The *jambolero*, for instance, knows that her work overlaps with the retailers and operators outside the fish port complex but this knowledge is only considered part of her function within the port. This means that the notion of the value-chain is something which the planners of the port had facilitated in the construction and arrangement of the port. The *jambolero*, however, only thinks of fish port in relation to his/her space and role within the port itself.

For space as perceived, the port has been transformed into gendered space and creative space. Gendered space refers to the sections of the port that

have become women's spaces and men's spaces, respectively, where women and men perform certain tasks or functions. These roles and locations, as the informants suggested, are regulated by cultural perceptions of differences between women and men. These gendered-perceived spaces are, in this respect, equipped with symbolic meanings as women consider the port as an extension of their homes. In this case, women magnify and strengthen the ties or strings that connect their households to the port. As a creative space, the women in market II also had found ways to circumvent the basic rule in the fish port that disallowed small businesses inside markets I, and II, through these economic endeavours as: bread vendor, fish vendor, and cell phone loader. As these economic engagements are formally not allowed, some of the women informants talked about introducing new informal rules. When interviewed on the reasons for carving out such spaces, they noticed that as long as your economic activity could be of help to others, the administration allowed you to proceed. One just needed to ensure that no complaints arose with the presence of these small economic activities.

With regard to lived space, the women informants stressed that what was more important than the economic gain were the core values such as honesty and trust in the fish port. For these women, such values functioned as pillars of success or as guarantees that they could continue to find work in the fish port complex. One informant, for instance, reiterated the point that if in one of the transactions, a *jambolero* misled a trader about fish quality, this would be forever remembered by the people who worked in the fish port. Such deceit would never go unpunished and people would avoid them. This was the reason that Cadiz Bibo, a *jambolero*, also proudly stated that working over a long time in the port meant having secured the trust of fellow workers and retailers. In this case, the length of stay in the fish port was proportional to the level of trustworthiness of the individual.

Since we are talking of lived or symbolic spaces, the notions of honesty and trust appear marginal to the value-chain process but are actually central to the fish port. Because through such values, a *jambolero* explains that if trust and honesty were violated, this would also signal the end of one's economic relation to retailers, scalers and operators in the fish port complex.

Women's Space and Longwe

With the perspectives of a female *jambolero* and a pumpboat owner in the fish port, the interface of their spaces with 2 value chain nodes can stand for empowering and fulfilling women spaces. While such points of overlap require financial capacities, the *jambolera* informant can be an example for women to go up in the ladder of economic opportunities in the fish port complex. Previously working as a checker, she picked up the skills to become a *jambolera*, a position she has now held for 9 years. Should women workers have better access to financial capital through loans to become *jamboleros* in the future? This is a direction which may be seriously considered to facilitate more opportunities for women working in the port. Also, the generosity that hovers around the fish port complex with regard to the fish catch is a feature that may have its roots in the cultural expectation of becoming part of and member of an organic community. As relations of trust are cultivated and friendships are formed, acts and gestures of generosity among workers and operators are demonstrated and shaped by the receptivity of the workers to each other's needs – specifically women, who work hard to earn decent money for their families.

Jan Cadiz Bibo, a *jambolero* since 2007, for instance, regards the fish port as space where one can have a good and enabling livelihood. She specified that in the port, if one would only work hard and be fair in transactions, money would eventually just flow. The informant particularly stressed the importance of honesty as a core value if ever one wanted to improve one's economic situation. With honesty, one gained the trust of the retailers, and it was necessary if ever one wanted to expand in the enterprise. With the positive contributions of the fish port to the life of the informant, she added that she actually already lived in the port. This meant that she already considered the port as an extension of her home. As an operator, another informant, Ritche Corto also found it rewarding to work and live in the port. She had worked in the port since 1998, and she had found that work in the port was not that demanding or difficult – “*tama-tama lang, di kaayo kapoy*”. As owner of a pumpboat with two engines, she saw herself staying in the port until she grew old. This is how she explained why working in the port was rewarding.

The literature on women in the production area, particularly the fishing industry, often describes the marginalization of women. However, we found that in the port in General Santos City women did not couple marginalization with their spaces. While women inhabited fewer spaces in the port than men, the informants consider their livelihood spaces rewarding and important. In hindsight, such observations may be attributed to the fact that the informants were working, earning money and did not have harassment issues in the fish port complex. The health related issues that women experienced were also confined to these problems: “*sakit sa hawak*” (muscle pain around the waist); “*matunok ang kamot sa isda*” (pricked by fish spikes specifically for sorters); and “*na-slide kay wala nagbotas*” (tripped or lost one’s sense of balance, since the checker did not put on her boots). Since these issues did not affect the overall sense of well-being of the informants, the port remained a viable livelihood option for women.

Another reason for the positive framing of the fish port can be traced back to the way women workers acknowledged the port’s capacity to provide other opportunities. For instance, the women informants underscored that one can always bring home a kilo of fish for the family. This guarantee created a sense of security for providing food for the family, and a relief from additional costs when buying fish from the local markets. As one informant expressed, “*basta naa ka diri, kay naa gyud kay isda na mauli pagkahapon*” (as long as one works and stays in the port, one is assured of bringing fish after a day’s work). Hence, this type of generosity may also have conditioned the possibility of women regarding the port as an enabling space. Despite the limitations in income for most women when compared to the income and opportunities for work for men, the practice of ‘fish-giving’ mitigates some economic worries. In fact, the informant during the interview was carrying two small sized fish – “*piritol*”, which she would take to her family later in the afternoon.

The positive frame accorded to the fish port when gleaned from Longwe (1991), however, left us with 2 ideas: that the stories either stand as manifestations of hope for better livelihood opportunities, or as a call for increased capacities to enable these women to critically see through their current spaces and situations in the fish port complex. Women seemed to only value their material welfare, since the port was able to provide opportunities for this, but they may still have desired better economic opportunities which the

current occupational sex disaggregation in the port was unable to provide. Hence, these women still thought and worked within Longwe's notion of welfare – which is still only the first stage in her welfare, access, conscientisation, mobilisation, control empowerment frame, since they were the secondary bread winners in their families, and the fish port upheld higher economic value to men's spaces and work. With these counter-insights to what the ethnographic data holds, the gender analytic frame points to the need to unpack the deep-seated biases in the fish port complex that remain unfavourable to the potentials and capacities of women workers and spaces. In the midst of poverty and lack of better economic opportunities, the seeming contentment of women workers in the fish port could be studied more in relation to the specific context of poverty in the area, to the level of material welfare, and the level of access which may have conditioned these women to positively acknowledge their sense of access to their current spaces in the fish port. This was part of the paper's insight that conditions the need for more studies in fishing ports in the Philippines as gendered spaces and biases predominantly remain unchecked. Following Longwe's framework, women in the first port, if they are to attain higher levels of empowerment, would need to eventually participate in conscientization and decision-making processes in the use of space in the fish port.

Acknowledgements

This study was made possible by the Commission on Higher Education fund support for the Sustainable Development of the Philippine Tuna Value Chain Project under the Higher Education Regional Research Center - UP Mindanao.

References

- Acheson, J. M. 1981. Anthropology of fishing. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 10: 275-316.
- Amerkhan, M. 2016. Jobs value chain analysis on Tuna. *Mindanao Jobs Report*. World Bank, Manila. 80 pp.
- Banez-Sumagaysay, M. 2003. Indicators of discrimination against women in farm homes and in the agricultural labor market. *Review of Women's Studies* 13: 25-48.
- Barut, N. and E. Garvilles. 2005. Philippines fishery report. In 1st Meeting of the scientific committee of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission WCPFC-SC1,

- pp. 1-12. National Fisheries Research and Development Institute (NFRDI), Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Philippines. <https://spccfpstore1.blob.core.windows.net/digitallibrary-docs/files/86/861b4476737fadf4cc56f0e8e337d75b.pdf?sv=2015-12>. Accessed 12 December 2015.
- Blasco, P.G. and H. Wardle. 2007. *How to read ethnography*. Routledge, New York. 224 pp.
- Demmke, P.T. 2006. Gender issues in the Pacific Islands Tuna industry. Forum Fisheries Agency, Honiara, Solomon Islands. FFA Report 07/21. 51 pp.
- Dungo, N.G. 2005. Negotiating patriarchy and globalization: Dynamics of women's work in an agricultural economy. *Review of women's studies: Special Issue on Gender, Globalization, Culture, and the Economy* 15: 41-66.
- FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations). 2013. Good practice policies to eliminate gender inequalities in fish value chains. <http://www.fao.org/>. Accessed 26 December 2015.
- Foucault, M. 1967. *Of other spaces: Utopias and heterotopias*. <http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf>. Accessed 13 December 2016.
- Kleiber, D.L. 2014. Gender and small-scale fisheries in the central Philippines (Doctoral dissertation). file:///E:/ubc_2014_november_kleiber_danika.pdf. Accessed 15 December 2015.
- Lee, S., D. Song and C. Ducruet. 2008. A tale of Asia's world ports: The spatial evolution in global hub port vities. *Geoforum* 39: 372-385.
- Lefebvre, H. 1996. *Writing on cities*. Selected, translated, and introduced by E. Kofman and E. Lebas. Blackwell, Massachusetts. 129 pp.
- Lefebvre, H. 2014. Production of space. (first published in 1991, reproduced in: *The people, place, and space reader* (eds. J.J. Gieseking and W. Mangold), pp. 298-294. Routledge, New York.
- Longwe, S. 1991. Gender awareness: The missing elements in the third world development project. In: *Changing perceptions: Writings on gender and development* (eds. T. Wallace. and C. March.), pp. 149-158. Oxfam, Oxford.
- Philippine Fisheries Development Authority. 2016. <http://pfda.gov.ph/>. Accessed 20 January 2016.
- Obsioma, Sarah. 2014. Equity in the tuna value chain: Enhancing men and women participation in the tuna industry of General Santos City, Philippines. Unpublished working paper. School of Management, University of the Philippines Mindanao, Davao City. 10 pp.
- Philippine Commission on Women. 2015. <http://www.pcw.gov.ph/>. Accessed 16 January 2016.
- State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture report: 2012. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, 2012. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i2727e.pdf>. Accessed 12 January 2016.