

Is the ‘New Man’ dead?

Tourism, self-perception and relative deprivation in Cuba

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Abstract

This study is about the relationship between the growth of tourism in Cuba and the sense of relative deprivation experienced by many Cubans, and about the results of this relationship in the society at large. I argue that by comparing themselves to their compatriots who have better access to CUC (Cuban convertible peso, one of the two official currencies in use in the country), and who thus enjoy a higher standard of living, many Cubans perceive themselves as relatively deprived. This thesis looks at how the perception of relative deprivation and the resulting desire to acquire CUC are gradually undermining the official socialist ideology, which had prevailed in Cuba since the revolution. Through the accounts given by my informants, I seek to give deeper insight into the everyday life of a segment of the Cuban population, how they earn their living, what they strive to achieve, and the reasons for their present dissatisfaction. Furthermore, the thesis looks at how the increasingly prevalent role of the CUC has promoted a culture of consumption, and a growing desire among many Cubans to acquire more material possessions in order to assert their social status in society. I argue that the consumer culture, which was introduced in Cuba through the development of foreign tourism, is inconsistent with the socialist values promoted since the revolution and personified by the ideal of the 'New Man'. I suggest that the moral dilemma arising from this contradiction is expressed through the discourse of respectability and reputation, which has a strong currency in the Caribbean cultural area. Finally, I question the relevance of the 'New Man' idea in the Cuban society, and reflect on some of the challenges Cubans are faced with as they struggle to preserve the socialist values of their revolutionary past, and simultaneously seek to achieve economic prosperity through clearly non-socialist means.

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Chapter 1

Tourism and transition in Cuba

I walked through the doors at Jose Marti International Airport, and I was hit by a wave of hot air. It was getting late, and yet the humidity was higher than I had expected at that time of the day. Before I got the chance to look around, I was surrounded by people asking me where I was going, and if I needed a taxi. They were all shouting, one louder than the other, in a mix of Spanish and English. I was rather overwhelmed by this unexpected greeting, so I just nodded and followed one of them towards his car. I was half way across the parking lot when I realised his car was one of the old American models, and it did not have a taxi sign. I hesitated for a few seconds. The man was walking a few meters ahead of me, chatting away in Spanish. I could only grasp a few phrases; the rest was lost on me. It had been a long day, and the idea of going back to the crowd of taxi drivers fighting for my attention was not particularly tempting. I kept walking, and let him help me place the luggage in the boot of his car. A few minutes later we hit the main road, and we were headed towards Havana.

Jorge, my taxi driver, was very talkative and kept chatting away. He surprised me with his openness. I had not expected Cubans to be willing to share so much information with someone they had only just met. We had only been driving for a few minutes, and he had already told me about his wife, their two children, and how they had to move out of the city because their two year old son was having asthma problems due to the pollution from the old cars. Jorge was an educated engineer, but because his wife had to stay home with their sick child, he was working as a taxi driver in order to earn some extra money. The agreed price for the taxi ride from the airport to the city was 20 CUC. This was more or less the standard rate, one that most tourists did not mind paying. From the research I had done about Cuba before my fieldwork, I learnt that the average monthly salary was between 15 and 20 CUC. This information put things a little more into perspective.

We were approaching the city, and I noticed how many of the roads and buildings we passed by had names with political signification, such as the Parque Lenin and Plaza de la revolucion. We passed by yet another billboard, which most people would consider propaganda. This one had a big picture of Ernesto Che Guevara, and the slogan: "*Tu ejemplo*

vive, tus ideas perduran”, (Your example lives, your ideas remain). I was familiar with Che Guevara’s ideas and their role in the early years of the revolution. While Fidel Castro have always been the front figure and the leader of the Cuban revolution, the ideas on which it was founded, were those of Che Guevara. The idea of creating *un Hombre Nuevo* (a ‘New Man’), who favoured moral rather than material incentives, was considered significant in the building of socialism. The individual ought to do what is considered best for the society rather than enhancing his/her own situation (Bye & Hoel 2006). I started wondering to what extent these ideas were still present in the Cuban society today. Did the Cuban people still relate to the ideal of the ‘New Man’, or were these billboards and slogans just remains from the country’s revolutionary past?

I asked Jorge what he thought. *“Che was one of our greatest heroes during the revolution. He represented the ideal revolutionary man, and has remained a symbol of the characteristics considered central in order to be a good socialist.”* It seemed that Jorge had much respect for the legend, but at the same time he was not afraid to challenge the relevance of these ideas in today’s Cuba. *“A lot has happened since Che announced his ideas, and Cuba has undergone many changes in the last 50 years. Our country has now entered a new era, and our situation today is no longer compatible with the ideas from the past. I believe there is a need for new heroes. What we need is someone who can sort out the economic situation here. You know, in the end it all comes down to money.”*

As I stepped out of the car and paid Jorge his 20 CUC, I could not help but wonder if the ‘New Man’ was indeed dead.

Main objectives of the thesis

My first meeting with a Cuban left me with many new impressions, questions and expectations as to what my fieldwork would be like. Interactions between foreign tourists and Cubans feed upon each other. While tourists have their impressions from what they see and experience during their stays, Cubans also have their own perceptions of their encounters with tourists. This thesis explores how interactions with tourists affect Cubans’ daily life. Profound changes have taken place in Cuba since the tourism boom during the 1990s. I argue that through increased contact with tourists, Cubans’ focus on obtaining foreign currency has grown substantially, along with their desire to improve their social and economic status. They

have also become more aware of many of the privileges some Cubans have attained through their access to CUC, which in turn changes their expectations to their own life situation. The thesis further suggests that the legalisation of the U.S. dollar¹ has contributed to a much more prominent divide between those who have access to CUC and thus can purchase luxury items, and those who depend on their government salaries and ration cards. Many Cubans are more dissatisfied with their own situation than they used to be, as a result of constantly comparing themselves with foreign tourists and, more importantly, with Cubans who are economically better off than themselves. This new situation and the desire to improve their position in society do in turn influence Cubans' decisions regarding jobs and alternative methods of earning more money. When Cubans choose to work within the tourist industry, because it gives easy access to CUC, their choice runs counter to the idea that the individual should be inspired by moral rather than financial rewards. It raises the question of whether these ideas are still present in the Cuban society today, or if the notion of the 'New Man' belongs to the past. The questions I wish to address in this thesis are: *in what ways has contact with tourists changed Cuban society and influenced Cubans' self-perception, and, insofar as it has created a perception of relative deprivation, how is this affecting the values instilled by the socialist revolution?*

Methodological reflections

This thesis draws on four months of fieldwork in Havana between August and December 2011. During my fieldwork I lived with two different families in *casas particulares* (private houses for rent to tourists and students), both located in Vedado. I primarily chose this part of Havana because it was close to the university. Throughout my fieldwork, Vedado also turned out to be the place where I met most of my informants. Staying at a *casa particular* had several advantages: It allowed me to gain insight into the daily lives of ordinary Cubans, and through my host families I was introduced to an extended network of friends and relatives, who became important participants in my research project.

In the months prior to my arrival in the field, I had done extensive reading on how to conduct fieldwork. A recurrent theme in what I read was the challenges of finding informants and

¹ Between 1993 and 2004, CUC was treated as equivalent to the U.S. dollars and both currencies were used in tourism. In November 2004, the Cuban government withdrew the U.S. dollar from circulation, and imposed a 10% tax when exchanging U.S. dollars and CUC (Eckstein 2004). It is often common to refer to CUC as dollars, and in this thesis the two terms will be used interchangeably, unless I specifically refer to U.S. dollars.

getting access to information. I was therefore surprised at the start by all the people who approached me and wanted to talk to me. I knew that to them I was *una extrañera* (a female foreigner), and it was quite possible that they saw me as a source to money. I was therefore not comfortable with this situation. I also felt that spending time with, and talking to, people whom I knew were looking for personal gains, was not the best foundation for my fieldwork. In such a situation it was very likely that people would tell me what they thought I wanted to hear, or they would adjust the facts in order to make their situation sound better, or worse, than it really was. This made my job as a researcher more difficult, because I was looking for informants who did not have their own agenda when talking to me. Nevertheless, I quickly realised that such might be difficult to find. Looking for someone who does not have their own agenda when talking or spending time with a tourist/foreigner was not easy. Despite my efforts to emphasise the fact that I was in Cuba merely as a researcher, and that there would be no money or any benefits for taking part in my research, I experienced on several occasions that men suggested engagement in romantic relationships. There is always a chance that the friends and acquaintances I made in Havana originally had other intentions than they revealed to me. That is something I can never be certain of. Besides, at the end of the day, it would be naive and disingenuous to claim that I did not have my own agenda as well when talking to my informants. I was looking for data, on which to build my M-Phil-thesis, and would not necessarily have been acquainted with the same people if I had been in Cuba for other purposes. It has therefore been imperative to take these reflections into consideration, both during the fieldwork and throughout the writing process.

Choice of methods

This thesis is based primarily on participant observation. When I arrived in Havana, I was prepared to do some semi-structured interviews in order to supplement this method. By combining interviews with participant observation, I thought I would attain a greater quantity of information. However, throughout the fieldwork I realised that I could gather enough information simply through observation and conversations. The topics of tourism, education and work were often discussed among young Cubans, and there was no need to resort to interviews. People's professions, what they study, and the reasons behind their choices were matters my informants were happy to talk about. In fact, I was often asked the same questions myself, as it was an easy way to open up for further conversations. Moreover, I was concerned that setting the stage for an interview would only add more pressure to the

situation, and thus would affect the answers given to me. Hirschfeld (2007), who has done extensive fieldwork in Cuba, has explained how difficult it was for her to perceive popular dissatisfaction, and how "people simply would not voice negative opinions in the context of researcher-interviewee interactions" (Ibid.: 5). If people are afraid of stating their opinions, or feel compelled to adjust the truth, this will reduce the credibility of the interviews. According to Hirschfeld (2007), informants were more willing to talk about, and discuss things off the record, through ordinary conversations in the course of everyday events. I consider this to be a more suitable methodological approach to study ordinary Cubans, and this played an important role in my choice of methods, and in the decision not to interview my informants.

I met my informants in a variety of situations: on the university campus, at parties, at salsa lessons, and through occasional encounters in the streets. A few weeks after my arrival, I started a Spanish course at University of Havana. Even though this course was mainly a way for me to improve my language skills, I quickly realised that being a student at the university gave me certain advantages in gaining access to information. Just by spending time on campus after my lessons, I met many Cuban students belonging to different faculties at the university. Being a student, I was also invited to the many *fiestas* (parties) arranged by the university; another great opportunity to meet and spend time with other students. By spending time with my informants on a regular basis, I got to know not only them, but also their families. I was invited to their homes, and introduced to their parents and grandparents, all living together under the same roof. I found this to be a good opportunity for me to get to know the different generations' views and experiences. Parents and grandparents, even older siblings, seemed to have a certain influence on people's decision when it came to education and career choice. It was also interesting to hear their predictions for their children's future, in the light of their own experiences. My informants were happy to refer and introduce me to their friends, and people they thought would be helpful to my research. This way I met new informants through the so called snowball sampling method².

My initial objective was to study young Cubans' choices when it comes to careers and education. On my arrival in Cuba I had therefore already identified two different groups of informants which I would need in order to get a better understanding of young Cubans'

² Snowball sampling is a method used by researchers in qualitative research, where "the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contact with others" (Bryman 2008: 184).

decisions. I wanted to talk to both students and workers within tourism. I quickly realised that these two categories often overlapped. I met people who worked within tourism, but also had a university education, and people who had graduated, but did not work at all. There were also those who had chosen not to finish their studies because they did not want to commit themselves to work for the state for two years, like they were obliged to do after having received free education. Consequently, when I chose my informants, I tried to include as many as I could of the different accounts I had come across. It is significant to avoid selecting informants based on convenience, but rather try to give accurate accounts of the existing diversities (Bryman 2008).

All my main informants were younger than thirty years old. This generation grew up during *el Periodo Especial* (the ‘Special Period’), and does not have the same associations to the revolution as the older generations. There is a lot of uncertainty around these people’s lives, which is why it is interesting to see how the present-day situation affects their choices, and perception of themselves as Cubans. Since my research was not aimed at one particular gender, it was important for me to get an equal number of male and female informants. Throughout the entire fieldwork I did however, find it difficult to establish contact with women. At the start I was worried that the male informants had their own personal agenda, which would explain their wish to take part in my research. This was of great concern to me, because I knew the validity of the data I collected would be questioned. I was later told by some of my female informants that women would often see me as a threat, and as a competitor for male attention. The process of establishing trust between me as a researcher and my female informants was therefore more challenging than I had first anticipated. It required a lot of time and effort in order to assure the women that I had no intentions other than completing my research project. At the end of my fieldwork I eventually managed to even out the number between male and female informants.

Positioning in the field

One of the major principles of participant observation is to try not to stand out, or in any way influence the behaviour of the subjects being studied (Mack et al. 2005). My status as *extrañera* made this task more difficult, because I was instantly placed in the tourist category. Anthropologists working with tourism have pointed out how in some tourist destinations, the identification of any foreigner as tourist makes it hard to overcome such a framing (Simoni

&McCabe 2008). Many people I talked to expressed their concern that foreigners could not understand the situation Cubans find themselves in. In their opinion, tourists who come to Cuba on holiday, and who stay a fortnight at a luxury resort, never really get a true understanding of the struggles Cubans face on a daily basis. The length of my stay, as compared to the tourists, and my efforts to adapt to the local way of living, were therefore important ways to avoid being identified as a tourist. Being a researcher and a student at the university did also help me undertake different roles in the field, where there was less focus on my status as a foreigner. Most of my informants were in their twenties, around my age. Regardless of our different backgrounds, as a young woman and as a student, I have experienced many of the same situations when it comes to making important choices, and having dreams and expectation for the future. Throughout the fieldwork I noticed how this particular factor helped me establish rapport with my informants, who willingly spoke and shared their thoughts and opinions with me. On the other hand, when studying the effects of tourism on ordinary Cubans, being categorised as a foreign tourist turned out to be useful. As a tourist I had easy access to all hotels, bars and restaurants, where contacts between Cubans and tourists took place. I often sought out these places in order to get a better understanding of how such contacts were established, and to observe the interaction between Cubans and tourists. Ultimately, by using both identities, as a researcher and a tourist, I was able to procure information that otherwise would have been difficult to obtain.

Every anthropologist strives to see the world of their informants from the “inside”. They try to understand how their informants live and perceive the world, and to make sense of the logic behind it all. Anthropologists emphasise the importance of cultural relativism, according to which every society is unique and should be understood based on its own premises (Barth 1972). Societies cannot be studied through common measures, such as age, gender, GDP, democratic rights and literacy numbers. For anthropologists such criteria are less significant, because they believe that in order to evaluate the life quality of a society, it needs to be study from the inside (Eriksen 2010). This is what Geertz (1994) called “from the native’s point of view”. It does not mean however, that the anthropologist must, or is able to, see the world exactly as her informants do. No matter how much effort is put in, the researcher will only be able to make an interpretation of their reality. The researcher’s own culture, gender and class background will also influence how he/she perceives the field.

The relations between my informants and me were characterised by friendship and reciprocity. I actively participated in conversations, while trying my best to avoid steering them in any particular direction. I wanted the informants to feel free to bring up any topic they were interested in. I willingly answered their questions to the best of my ability, although I was careful not to give advice or express any feelings that could influence their decisions. Sometimes it was difficult to determine my role in the field. While I found it easier to understand my informants as a friend than merely as a researcher, it was sometimes problematic to draw the line between the two roles as these often overlapped. It was not always easy to distinguish between the information given to me as a researcher, and the information shared with me as a friend in confidence.

Another more personal dilemma I faced during fieldwork was how much information I should share with my informants about life outside Cuba. Since the Cuban newspapers and TV channels broadcast only a limited amount of international news, many Cubans use foreigners as a source of information. My informants were therefore very interested in hearing and learning about Norway, and Europe in general. This opened up for interesting conversations, during which we drew many comparisons between our two countries. I believe this was informative to both parts. At times I did, however, find myself in an awkward situation. After listening to their complaints about the Cuban system, and the struggles they face on a daily basis, I felt uncomfortable telling them about the very privileged conditions under which people live in Norway.

Before entering the field, I had made the decision not to bring a tape recorder due to the added responsibility of having such tapes in my possession. I was concerned about the consequences it would have for my informants if these tapes ended up in the hands of the authorities. It was important to me that neither my informants, nor myself, were subjected to any danger as a direct consequence of my research. The conversations referred to are therefore based on my own memory, and the notes I made as soon as I had pen and paper, or my computer available. In terms of language, both Spanish and English were used, depending on the situation and the informants. Many were eager to practice their English with me, and I felt the same way about Spanish. Even though my Spanish improved during my stay, I was not fluent. The Cuban dialect did also make it more difficult for me to follow conversations Cubans had among themselves. I might therefore have failed to grasp certain parts of these

conversations. Nevertheless, I hope that not too much of the content has been lost in translation. Ultimately, I believe that using both languages had an added advantage, as it expanded the range of informants I could find. Especially when interacting with teenagers and the elderly, Spanish was imperative.

One of the most prominent challenges when conducting fieldwork in Cuba is the authorities. With the limitations imposed by the regime on freedom of expression, and the high level of social control, the government has tight control over most aspect of people's lives. When explaining the broad contours of social control in Cuba, Aguirre (2002) points out how "social life tends to be politicized, so that all social behavior becomes subject to political interpretation and state regulation" (2002: 66). Moreover, since the tourist boom in Cuba accelerated during the 1990s, Cuban authorities try to control the flow of tourists by hindering, and sometimes penalising, non-official contact between Cubans and tourists (Simoni & McCabe 2008). I was therefore prepared that the fear of getting in trouble with the authorities would make the informants reluctant to share their sincere opinions when asked questions about the regime. Consequently, I tried to avoid asking questions that are directly related to people's views of the regime. When I arrived I was not sure how comfortable people would be to talk about the current political situation. Even though participants in my project were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality, this may not have been enough to make them feel secure. Despite their compliance to share their views with me, there is always the possibility that some informants were also withholding information. In the effort to keep my promise of anonymity of my informants, all the names are changed, and some background information has been altered.

Reflections about my research

It has been suggested that the problem with doing participant observation among a small number of individuals, is how to generalise the findings to other settings, because they can never be representative of the entire society (Bryman 2008). The same critique can be directed at the method I used to find my informants. With the snowball sampling method it is very unlikely that my sample will be representative for the population. Although I did try to include different accounts in order to convey a sense of diversity among young Cubans, I am aware that my small number of informants is not representative of the Cuban population. If I had lived in a different part of the city, met different people, and chosen different informants,

my findings might have looked fairly different. Although the situations and experiences described by my informants are shared by many Cubans, I have been careful not to present them as general descriptions of every Cuban's daily life. The analysis and conclusions drawn in this thesis are based on the information I obtained through interaction with a handful of persons, who were my informants. The purpose of this study is not to present the reality as perceived by all Cubans, but to present what my informants think, how their thoughts and experiences can be understood in light of theory and previous research. My research is a modest contribution to a better understanding of the complexity of the current situation in Cuba.

Throughout fieldwork and the writing process, my project has changed form. While the research question and the choice of theoretical framework have influenced the type of material I was looking for, the data gathered throughout fieldwork have also changed the initial focus. I am aware that as a researcher it is inevitable to give more importance to certain encounters than others, and in that way I have shaped the framework in which my analysis were composed. According to Hastrup (1992) an anthropologist is not merely a writer, but also an author. It is therefore important to apply the authorial craft with care to make sure the narrative is convincing as ethnography (Ibid.). I cannot disregard the possibility that both political and cultural values have influenced my decisions of what, and how, I have chosen to present the data. Because data collection and observations always involve interpretations, my findings and my analysis are based on my own comprehension of my informants' reality. Through the writing process, I have however, tried to be critical to my own findings. I have attempted to see the situations in ways that my informants can recognise themselves. Through conversations with my informants I also asked whether I had understood and interpreted their statements correctly. I found this method of respondent validation³ very helpful, because it allowed me to control whether or not my findings corresponded with the perspectives of my research participants. After all, there are multiple layers of perspective, and the researcher's work will always just be interpretations of these perspectives.

One of the fundamental paradoxes of fieldwork is the conflict between the fieldworker's roles as both a participant and an observer. Participation requires involvement, while observation

³ Respondent validation is a process where the researcher presents his/her findings to the research participants in order to establish whether the research corresponds with the experiences of the participants (Bryman 2008)

implies independence and distance, in other words an outsider's perspective. On the other hand, an ethnographer can never remain external to the object of his/her study. Factors such as age, gender, status and previous life experiences enable particular kinds of insight, which will define the researcher's position in the field (Hastrup 1992). While it is impossible for the researcher to be completely objective, the validity of the research will be evaluated by the researcher's ability to avoid letting personal values and ideas overtly influence the findings (Bryman 2008). In any research, it is important to have secondary sources that support the collected data, as it will strengthen its reliability. Much of the literature on Cuba, whether it is about development, human rights or foreign policy, tends to be either supportive or dismissive of the Cuban regime. I therefore had to be careful when assessing these sources. Since much of the literature on Cuba has been written by supporters and opponents of the regime, their political views are likely to colour their approach. Although I had tried to gather as much background information as possible about Cuba before conducting fieldwork, I tried my best not to let conclusions from previous research influence my own findings, and to avoid pre-assumptions of what the research would conclude.

My relations to the informants were another concern regarding objectivity. Some of these relations were characterised by friendship. Through our conversations I obtained certain information, which, I believe they would not have shared with me if they had seen me only as a researcher. People treat each other differently, depending on the type of relation they have, and this is also the case for the researcher. It is therefore probable that the descriptions in this thesis are influenced by my own personal relations to my informants. Remaining a detached observer despite the relations between the researcher and his/her informants is a common dilemma, which most anthropologists face when conducting fieldwork. Making friends is often the main way to establish rapport during the early stages of fieldwork (Robben & Sluka 2012). Some scholars are however, sceptical to characterising the relationship between the researcher and the research participants as friendship. Since the researcher has no investment in the relationship after the project is completed, Cotterill (1992) suggests that the term "friendly stranger" is more appropriate to describe the anthropologist's status. My experience confirms this argument, as I have had little, or close to no, contact with my informants since I left Cuba. This is of course partly because internet access in Cuba is limited, and long distance phone calls are expensive. Since I was always aware that keeping in touch with the informants would be difficult, I made extra effort to remind them of my status as a researcher,

and that the information I was searching for was for my thesis. I did not want them to view me as a friend, to whom they could open up and with whom they could share their personal thoughts and feelings, since I would shortly after disappear from their lives. I discovered however, that my status as “friendly stranger” sometimes elicited unexpected reactions. Sometimes I think informants shared certain information with me precisely because I was a stranger to them. This meant they could openly discuss some controversial topics with me without feeling uncomfortable or embarrassed, because they knew I would not be around for long. Being a stranger and being a friend did therefore have notable advantages, depending on how the informants felt about sharing information.

Finally, there is the dilemma most fieldworkers experience when conducting fieldwork in places where they are considered to be better off than their informants. On several occasions I experience that my informants asked for my help to get them things that could not buy unless they had CUC, or to let them accompany me to places where only tourists had access etc. For me it was a difficult ethical dilemma, because I knew how easily I could help them and what a huge difference this little gesture would make for them. At the same time I knew I had to be careful to avoid letting my informants take advantage of my position. If people knew that I was doing favours, I was worried that they would want to know me for the wrong reasons, something that could jeopardise the quality of my research project. I therefore had to make it very clear from the beginning that I was there as a student in anthropology, and that I did not have the financial resources to pay for everyone’s drinks, for their entrance fees at clubs or for our taxi rides. I always made sure we split the bills, or paid in turns, in order to establish an equal relationship between my informants and myself. This was an important precondition to avoid being taken advantage of, but it was also an attempt to reduce the risk of sticking out, and to become a more equal member of their group. Since these boundaries were established early in our meetings, they were easier to maintain as the fieldwork progressed, and my informants were aware of my status as a researcher and a student.

Structure of the thesis

I start the next chapter by giving an historical background with focus on the period after 1959. It gives an overview of some of the key events that took place throughout this period, and which have been considerably influential on Cuba’s current situation. Furthermore, this chapter provides a summary of the existing literature on tourism in Cuba, particularly

focusing on the latest tourism boom in the 1990s. This literature depicts and analyses how tourism affects Cubans' daily lives, and how the increasing flux of tourists has also created social differences between Cubans with access to foreign currency and Cubans without such access. I look at how the growing importance of foreign currency and the focus on consumption are in contradiction to the revolutionary ideas of moral rather than material incentives. The increasing social inequalities are generating a certain level of dissatisfaction among Cubans, and I raise the question of a link between tourism and relative deprivation. The aim of presenting a wide range of secondary sources is to enable the reader to relate the existing literature with the empirical data, which will be presented in chapter 3.

In chapter 3, I introduce my informants and give accounts of how their lives were influenced by their contact with tourists and the steadily growing role of foreign currency. This chapter gives a closer look at some of the moral dilemmas my informants were facing when it came to choosing jobs and careers. It explores some of the alternative methods used to supplement their incomes, some more controversial than others. The empirical contribution in this chapter is viewed in light of the social and economic situation in Cuba, presented in chapter 2. The aim is to make the reader understand how my informants' lives are parts of much larger social structures, which are continuously changing as a result of tourism.

In chapter 4, I analyse some of the information provided in chapter 3, and discuss these issues in detail. Among them are the consequences of the strengthened role of the CUC, such as emigration, especially of skilled Cubans, and increased social inequality. I also discuss how people tend to compare themselves with others, and with whom these comparisons are made. The focus is on how and why tourism in Cuba creates particular forms of relative deprivation. Finally, I look at why tourism and socialism tend to be seen as incompatible, and how Cubans live in a dual world of two opposing ideologies. I draw comparisons between this and the respectability-reputation dualism, a model used to explain the dilemmas of two opposing moral systems in the Caribbean.

The final chapter sums up the main results of my study, and draw up some concluding remarks on the findings presented in this thesis. Finally, I raise some questions that go beyond the scope of my own research, but which would make interesting research topics for

future studies, and which may contribute to giving a deeper understanding of tourism and its effects on the Cuban society.

Chapter 2

Cuba: A revolutionary society at a crossroads

“A revolution is not a bed of roses. A revolution is a struggle to the death between the future and the past.”

Fidel Castro

The Cuban past and present

In order to understand the current situation in Cuba, it is necessary to be familiar with the country's past, and with some of the most important events of its recent history. Cuba is the largest and most populous island in the Caribbean. It is located between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, only 90 miles off the coast of Florida. Cuba has roughly eleven million inhabitants, with more than two million living in the capital Havana (United Nations 2007). Cuba is a multiracial society, where the population is mainly of Spanish and African origin. Statistics show that 65.1 % of the population are white, 24.8 % mulatto and mestizo, and 10.1 % black (CIA 2012). Ethnic pluralism is characteristic for the Caribbean. The region has a number of distinctive social and cultural features, as a result of a common history marked by colonisation, slavery and fight for independence. In these respects, Cuba is indeed typically Caribbean. However, Cuba is also a unique case in the region due to its recent history, especially since 1959.

Since Spain's first settlement in 1512, Cuba remained under Spanish colonial rule until 1898. During the Spanish-American independence war, the United States assumed control over the island. Although Cuba gained its independence in 1902, the Platt Amendment agreement allowed the US to intervene in Cuba to protect American interests (Cramer 2009). Thus, the US continued having considerable influence on the country's political and economic situation. It remained Cuba's most important trading partner and the main supporter behind the Batista regime on the eve of the 1959 revolution. As a result of the US military intervention in Cuba, the Cuban revolution was characterised by strong anti-Americanism. The focus of this thesis is on the period after 1959, with particular emphasis on the 'Special Period'.⁴

⁴ The period after 1989 was called the 'Special Period' due to the economic crisis the island experienced as a result of the collapse of the Eastern bloc.

When Fidel Castro and his rebel army seized power, their political aims were to eradicate poverty, decrease the high unemployment rate, improve the health and education systems, and achieve a better distribution of the economic resources (Skierka 2007). In the period before 1959, Batista had established himself as a political leader, and the regime was a non-ideological component. Fulgencio Batista⁵ had close ties with the American mafia, who dominated large aspects of the economy. For Americans, Cuba had become a prime holiday destination where an increasing number of tourists enjoyed gambling, nightlife and Cuban women. In other words, Cuba was the sub-tropical playground, where everything was allowed (Sheller & Urry 2004). The travel industry accelerated Cuban's economic development, as well as the country's dependence on the United States (Merrill 2009). Although the economy flourished during the Batista regime, political loyalty was weak, and the regime was both corrupt and repressive. (Ibid.). For ordinary Cubans this was a difficult period because of the limitations in social services. Great social inequalities created more dissatisfaction among the population, which led to increasing support of Castro and the revolution (Chehabi & Linz 1998). Castro wanted to create a new and better society, without illiteracy and with free education for everyone. Cuba should no longer be associated with casinos, gambling, prostitution, and organised crime, but become a society where all the citizens would have equal opportunities (Bye & Hoel 2006).

In order to understand the kind of socialism the Cuban revolution wanted to achieve, we need to turn to Che Guevara's thoughts and ideas. For Che Guevara, socialism was not only about producing and distributing wealth; it was also about establishing values and morals (Tablada 1989). The main aim of the revolution was therefore to create a new socialism, which would form a 'New Man'. Che Guevara believed that socialism was about moral persuasion. Through the revolution, the individual would learn to focus on the community and to strive to achieve common goals. Socialism cannot be built merely through the production of wealth, and his hope was to replace material with moral incentives. In order to achieve genuine socialism, it was necessary to change the way the individual interacted with society. In his speech in 1963, Che Guevara claimed that "material good will not play a role in the new society ... and [will] be replaced by nonmaterial incentives such as the sense of duty and the new revolutionary way of thinking" (Skierka 2007: 163). Che Guevara had played an important role as advocate for socialist purity, and was widely seen as the model for the 'New

⁵ Fulgencio Batista was a Cuban military leader and president in Cuba before the Cuban Revolution in 1959.

Man'. This is someone who finds incentive in work itself rather than in the selfish acquisition of material goods (Skierka 2007). Che Guevara's ideas, both his political and economic thoughts, have had a profound impact on the Cuban revolution, and the path it has taken since the revolutionary government assumed power (Tablada 1989). Although the socialist ideology has been challenged in the years after 1989, it remains a strong guideline on most aspects of social life (Rosendahl 1997).

The first step in building a new society was for the state to distribute food and clothing, and to provide health care and education for all citizens. Everyone was to have equal access to all the goods and services, especially health care and education. These were considered socialist conquests, which ought to be public and free of charge. In the early years of the revolution, a dramatic quantitative development of the education system took place on all levels (Ramonet 2008). The educational institutions became important instruments of the state, used to educate the population and cultivate revolutionary values (Weinreb 2009). Education was a key factor in the development of Cuban society, and equally significant was the remarkable improvements in the health care system. There was notable progress despite the economic embargo the US initiated in the years after the revolution, which made it difficult for Cubans to obtain medicine and equipment. At present, Cuba is the only country in Latin America with a universal free health care system. It has the largest number of doctors, nurses and hospital beds per capita in Latin America, and its achievements are higher than in many western countries (Hirschfeld 2007). The restructuring of the Cuban health care system distinguishes it from others in the region, particularly in scope and access. The revolutionary regime was the first one in Cuban history that placed a greater emphasis on the poor people rather than the country's economic interests. In no other country in the Caribbean or Latin America were the needs of the low-income groups better met than in Cuba (Eckstein 1986). These investments were considered important because they were to help the country achieve a higher level of socialism. As long as the state provided its people with their most basic needs, it was expected that this would contribute to reducing the focus on consumption. Equal salaries and redistribution of land and properties would contribute to greater equality among the population, and to the elimination of the class differences that existed in Cuba prior to the revolution. Ultimately, the social revolution was a vital precondition for the social accomplishments. The remarkable performance in education and health care has made Cuba stand out in its region, and has often been referred to as a model for other Caribbean countries

to adopt. With the revolution, Cuban society also differs from its neighbours in terms of low inequality among the population (Eckstein 1986). These socio-economic and political changes inevitably entailed cultural changes, which distinguish Cuban society from other Caribbean societies.

The trade embargo from the US made it difficult to build up an effective economy. The Soviet Union therefore gave great subsidies, and allowed Cuba to buy oil at low prices. The sugar industry continued to be the country's main source of income, and was an important contributor to the export oriented economic model. Nevertheless, in the 1980s, the weaknesses of the system became more apparent. While some of these weaknesses had internal causes, others originated from attempts to copy the aspects of the Euro-Soviet model (López 2002; Ramonet 2008). After the setback in the socialist camp in Eastern Europe, and the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Cuba went through a very difficult period, described by Castro as "*el periodo especial en tiempos de paz*" (a special period in peace time). As a result of its opposition to the capitalist world, Cuba had become so dependent on the Soviet Union that it was in a vulnerable position. Due to the dramatic decline in the government financial resources, the extensive welfare system was no longer capable of providing for the population. Both the education and the health care system declined in quality (López 2002). Regardless of the declining capacity of the government to provide its citizens with the basic essentials, the government did strive to meet its promises of free and equal access to the social services that provide a basic level of welfare (Valdes &Valdes Paz 2004). In this, the Cuban government's policies differed from the adjustment programmes implemented in many other countries. Although their quality had dwindled, education and health care remained universal even during the worst crisis (Monreal 2002).

In its effort to provide these social services, the country could no longer rely on the sugar industry, and had to find alternative sources of income. As Cuba's economic situation deteriorated further, the government was compelled to introduce rationing on most products (Taaffe 2000). At the same time, the United States tightened its trade embargo, hoping it would lead to the collapse of Castro's regime. Furthermore, Cuba was forced to open up for tourism to bring back hard currency to the country. In an effort to improve the economy, the government legalised the U.S. dollar in 1993. The aim was to stop the exchange between dollars and *pesos nacionales* (Cuban pesos) on the black market, and introduce legal

exchange offices. This would also encourage friends and family to send remittance from abroad. To make it easier for tourists and Cubans to spend dollars, new shops and restaurants were opened, where customers could pay in dollars. Consequently, the dollar was introduced and assumed an important role in Cubans' daily lives. This was seen by many as demoralizing, as the move brought back prostitution, created a black market economy, and people left their traditional jobs in the state sector to work in the tourist industry (Eckstein 2004).

Since the revolution, the wages in Cuba were standardised with small differences regardless of the type of jobs. This meant a substantial decrease in the salaries of the prosperous Cubans, and a considerable increase of the salaries of the poor. Such equalisation of people's income would most likely not have been possible without the subsidies from the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, it represents one of the most successful examples of how foreign aid contributes to development, equalisation and the satisfaction of people's basic needs (Bye & Hoel 2006). After the deterioration of real wages during the crisis of the 1990s, there seems to be a consensus that the wages are insufficient to meet people's basic needs (Prieto & Ruiz 2011). Since the wages within the public sector remain standardised, inequalities in income often arise from the type of income sources rather than from the wages themselves. The major alternative sources of income are remittances from friends and family members abroad, and contacts with tourists. Access to CUC is more common among those who work in the tourism sector than among those employed in traditional occupations (Ibid.). Access to these alternative income sources also varies along ethnic and class lines. It is not uncommon to find white Cubans working in key-positions within tourism, such as front-desk personnel or management positions. On the other hand, black Cubans often work in the background, cooking or cleaning, where they have less direct contact with tourists (Blum 2011). The dual currency thus accentuates the inequality between ordinary Cubans and Cubans working in tourism, as well as among ethnic groups.

In 2008, Cuba was severely hit by the recession, and the fall in the price of nickel, which by then had become one of Cuba's main exports, only exacerbated the problems. Even though the current situation might be considered as slightly better than during the 'Special Period', Cuba is, both economically and politically, a long way from the revolutionary optimism at the height of the Cold War (Plummer 2008). The government could no longer afford to maintain

the status quo. With the shortcomings of the system laid bare and the expectations for change rising, Cuba is now standing at a major crossroads.

Before 1991, Cuba had experienced the constraints of its economic dependency on great national powers. Cuba was closely tied to the United States before the revolution and to the Soviet Union during the Cold War. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Cuba was forced to find its own path, and started to build relations with Canada, China, and Europe. Cuba also strengthened its relations to many of the Latin American countries, among which Venezuela and Bolivia have become indispensable allies (Cramer 2009). It is therefore important to note that Cuba has not been isolated. Politically and economically however, it has gone from being linked to one country to having multiple trading partners. While there has been a shift in the country's foreign relations, there have also been certain internal changes. The most important are economic reforms, and the message to the Cuban people was to start working harder and to expect less from the government. In September 2010, Cuba announced a radical plan to lay off huge numbers of state employees in order to revive the country's struggling economy. The Cuban government currently controls almost all aspects of the economy and employs about 85% of the official workforce (BBC News 2010). As part of the new reforms, the government has expanded the opportunities for self-employment. President Raul Castro has announced that such changes are needed to update the economic model to ensure the survival of socialism (CIA 2012).

Since the end of the Cold War, much of the existing literature on Cuba has dealt with the contested and long anticipated democratisation process. A number of different theories have been applied to the case in the attempt to explain why there has not yet been a transition towards a more democratic system. Scholars have attempted to predict the durability of the current regime (Gonzalez & McCarthy 2004; López 2002). It has been claimed that, on the basis of examples from Eastern Europe and Latin America, authoritarian regimes tend to go through a transformation towards democracy when the state faces economic distress (López 2002). Poor economic performance was a key factor leading to the fall of communism in Eastern Europe. The economic situation led to a decline in people's standard of living, which made them less tolerant towards the regimes, and blamed the government for the increased poverty (Ibid.). Whereas the conditions of economic decay were one of the most important causes of the fall of other communist regimes, this situation has not yet prevailed in Cuba.

Poor economic performance is not in itself a reason for regime change. Cuba has experienced deficient economic conditions during the 1990s, yet, no such transformation has taken place (López 2002).

Diana Raby (2006) claims that socialism can only survive in a country for a certain period of time. She argues that the reason why it will always be unstable is because the constant pressure from capitalism will cause tensions. Its prevalence is therefore dependent on initiative and support from the working-class, and a close dialogue between leaders and political innovators is crucial. Fidel Castro has stated that he is not worried that the US will bring an end to the revolution. He does not believe that the Cuban people will allow Cuba to become a US colony. He claims however, that the revolution itself and the Cuban people can destroy the revolution unless the errors are corrected. Castro believes it is necessary to yet again change society to eradicate the inequalities and the injustice that remain (Ramonet 2008). Cuba is currently facing a difficult challenge attempting to strike a balance between introducing capitalist measures to secure the economy, and preserving what is left of the socialist ideas from the revolution.

Tourism in Cuba

Tourism is not a new phenomenon in Cuba. As already mentioned, in the years prior to the revolution, Cuba was a popular destination for rich Americans who came to enjoy luxury resorts, gambling, and an abundant nightlife. The revolution did however, put an end to the growth of tourism, as the communist ideology and the state-planned economy condemned tourism as a capitalist evil, associated with corruption, drugs, social inequality and racism (Henthorne & George 2010; Taylor & McGlynn 2009). It was not till the 1990s that tourism really started to pick up again. This was a difficult period for Cuba, whose economy was in a very fragile condition. The availability of food, clothing, fuel and medicines had quickly declined, which profoundly affected the daily lives of Cuban people (Spencer 2010). In an attempt to revive the crippled economy, the Cuban government reluctantly implemented certain temporary measures, such as the legalisation of the U.S. dollar and lifting the restrictions on self-employment. The government also started to actively promote tourism to encourage foreign investment. These measures proved to be highly successful, and by the mid-1990s tourism overtook the sugar industry as the primary source of hard currency. Today Cuba attracts more than two million travellers every year, a number that is expected to

increase considerably if the US lifts its travel ban to Cuba. While the tourist boom is anticipated to accelerate even further, there is disagreement among experts concerning the outcome of this strategy (Adams 2008; Elliott & Neirotti 2008; Knight & Sharpley 2009).

The growing importance of tourism has led anthropologists to focus on the social, economic and cultural impacts this has on the local population. Scholars have expressed their concern about the negative repercussions, and whether the local culture can withstand the impacts from tourism development (Chambers 1997). While tourism was considered necessary in order to resuscitate the economy, there was much scepticism towards the strategy of using capitalistic measures to keep socialism in Cuba alive. For instance, the many challenges of tourism in Cuba, and questions concerning its viability in a global competitive market, have received considerable attention (Elliott & Neirotti 2008). Among these challenges are a thriving black market, social inequalities, ‘tourism apartheid’, and prostitution. There has also been a structural shift in the work force towards the tourism sector, which has created labour shortages in other sectors. Already in the late 1980s, it was not uncommon to see well educated young people working in unrelated fields, a phenomenon which was exacerbated by the increase in tourism over the last twenty years (Miller 2008). Menial tourism jobs have since become more desirable than professional and high-level government ones, because they are more financially rewarding (Adams 2008). Some Cubans have even given up paid employment altogether, because the wages are so low that they simply do not think it is worth the trouble of going to work (Berg 2004a). Instead they spend their time *resolver* (to fix) and *conseguir* (to get), two words commonly used in Cuba to describe the alternative methods used to get hold of certain products (Underlid 2012)

To understand Cubans’ desire to work within the tourist industry, it is necessary to be familiar with the two different currencies in Cuba. The *moneda nacional*, also referred to as Cuban peso (CUP), is the local currency, in which Cubans get paid their state salaries. This is also the currency Cubans use on a daily basis to buy their groceries, pay their bus fares, and buy lunch at the *paladares* (small private restaurants). Nevertheless, the low salaries and the low purchasing power of the CUP limit Cubans’ ability to achieve their desired standard of living. Many products are for instance only available to those who can pay in CUC. Necessities are still sold in CUP, however luxury items such as alcohol, electronics, and toiletries are only sold in “dollar shops” (Eckstein 2004). The dual currency was meant to be

a temporary measure to get money from tourists without increasing the prices of basic products. Instead, the system of two currencies has become a symbol of economic differences (Underlid 2012). While all Cubans have access to both currencies, since it is possible to exchange at the CADECA (*Casa de cambio*, Exchange Bureau), not everyone has direct access to CUC (Eckstein 2004; Stronza 2001). Tourists pay everything in CUC, hotels, taxis, restaurants etc. Cubans whose work is directly or indirectly related to the tourist industry, such as taxi drivers, bartenders and restaurant waiters, can accede to CUC. Tips from tourists can often amount to as much as an average monthly salary, which makes a job within tourism a much more compelling enticement in comparison to the low state salaries (Henthorne & George 2010; Weinreb 2009).

Another undesired consequence after Cuba reinserted itself into the global tourist market, is the emergence of the phenomenon called *jineterismo*.⁶ This issue has been widely discussed among academics, along with the topic of sex tourism in Cuba. Whereas scholars approach the topic from different angles, there seem to be an agreement that the economic crisis and the legalisation of the U.S. dollar were stimulating factors in the growth of *jineterismo*. The low state salaries and limited job opportunities have also driven many young Cubans to engage in alternative, often illegal, economic activities (Fusco 1998; Kempadoo 1999; Kummels 2005; O'Connell Davidson 1996; Schwartz 1997). Sheller and Urry (2004) also argue that Cuba's reputation in the 1950s, as the brothel of the Caribbean, contributed to the resurrection of sex tourism in the 1990s. There are three ways Cubans have legal access to CUC: Through employment in the tourist sector, through small private businesses, or through remittance from relatives abroad. Many Cubans do not have such access, and find themselves resorting to other means, of which *jineterismo* is an example (Berg 2004b). Cuban men and women often engage in relationships with foreign tourists, both of sexual and commercial nature. Ultimately, *jineterismo* is considered a moral problem, as engagement in such activities is regarded as a sign of antisocial behaviour (Berg 2004a).

There is much pessimism concerning the effects of tourism, however not all social scientists share this view. Wilkinson (2008) argues that the benefits deriving from tourism in Cuba outweigh the problems it creates. He claims that the trend of doctors and engineers giving up

⁶ *Jineterismo* literally means horseback riding. The term was initially used to refer to prostitution, but is today used more widely to include a broad range of activities that result in acquiring hard currency from tourists (Adams 2008).

their professions to work in the tourism sector, because it gives better return in terms of income, has been vastly exaggerated. According to Wilkinson, the number of people employed in the tourism sector is relatively low in comparison to the agriculture sector and in public services (Ibid.). Moreover, this boom in the tourism industry has not only helped the country's economy back on track, but has also created new opportunities for ordinary Cubans, whose lives are now being increasingly affected by the presence of tourists. Cubans are now allowed to run small private restaurants, rent out rooms in their homes, or drive taxis, all which allows them to procure CUC through contact with tourists. Accordingly, Cubans are now able to purchase different products, previously inaccessible to them, and this helps improve their standard of living (Wilkinson 2008).

Self-perception – the ‘New Man’

Gustavsen (2009) explores the link between tourism and the formation of identity in Cuba in the period between 1945 and 2007. He claims that “tourism provided a lens for foreign visitors to view the island, its people, and its culture; *to know* what it meant to be Cuban” (Gustavsen 2009: 2). By embracing tourism, Cuba entered a very competitive market, and the island had to create an appealing identity in order to attract tourists. Gustavsen argues further that “Cubans occasionally modified their individual identities in response to foreign expectations regarding the island’s carefully constructed national identity” (Gustavsen 2009: 5). He thoroughly examines the ways tourism has influenced and helped shape Cuban identity, as perceived from the perspective of foreign tourists.

For tourists, Cuba is often associated with the vintage American cars, cigars factories, mojitos and t-shirts with Che Guevara’s portrait. These have become distinctive marks, which together create an image of what Cuba is like. The perception of Cuba as one of the last socialist bastions, and the “feeling of going back in time” to experience the nostalgia from the days of the revolution, are two reasons why Cuba has become such a popular tourist destination (Babb 2010). Cubans know that tourists seek “the authentically Cuban”, and American cars and posters of Che Guevara are part of their expectations. It is not unusual for locals to try to meet the tourists’ expectations of what is authentic, even if the result may be artificial. “Tourism has as much potential to revive old values as it does to destroy them” (Stronza 2001: 271). Local traditions and values can therefore become more significant once they are commoditised. In light of Gustavsen’s argument, keeping the old cars and

overplaying the significance of Che Guevara in Cuba today, could be considered a part of Cubans' strategy to promote their national identity in response to foreign expectations.

Tourism has led to greater involvement in the global capitalist market; yet the Cuban government is still defining Cuba as socialist. It is a difficult time for Cuban citizens, because their revolutionary ideals are coming into direct contact with global market forces (Porter 2008). "The new and varying forms of consumption that Cubans have encountered are fragmenting socialist ideals and values, perceptions of national unity, and, ultimately, definitions of belonging and citizenship." (Porter 2008: 145). Among the socialist ideals and values, the government has emphasised the importance of equality among all citizens, regardless of gender, background, and income. There has also been focus on putting the need of the community first, and abstain from activities driven by the desire of personal gain (Guevara 2005). These ideas were the underpinning of the 'New Man', a notion that has been challenged by the increased focus on consumption. Also the very complex social phenomenon of *jineterismo* challenges the revolutionary values of social and racial equality. The activities are inconsistent with the revolutionary ideas, and thus create a moral dilemma: Cubans find themselves torn between their obligations to live by the socialist ideals and their personal desire of economic enhancement. For some, *jineterismo* is a sign of declining moral values, others consider it a way to improve their lives and acquire more economic freedom. According to Berg, "the revolutionary government is reluctant to address the causes of *jineterismo* as they go to the core of anxieties over the survival of socialism and expose the failure of constructing a 'New Man'" (Berg 2004a: 198). Nevertheless, prostitution in Cuba is not illegal. Thus, the government use a law known as "state of dangerousness" in order to incarcerate people who they believe commit crimes that contradict the socialist morality (Cabeza 2004). The official reason for imprisoning Cubans who spend time with tourists is to protect the latter, and prevent Cubans from trying to cheat them. Cubans are often arrested because they look like a stereotypical *jinetero/jinetera*. Since this stereotype is often ethnically tainted, many black Cubans feel constantly threatened because they can no longer walk freely in the streets without being harassed by the police (Berg 2004a).

There is now a growing division between Cubans with access to CUC and Cubans without this access, and the inability to consume is making some Cubans feel second-class citizens in their own country. Access to CUC determines whether Cubans are able to buy food and other

consumer goods from “dollar shops”, or possibly on the black market. For those without access, there are limitations as to what products they can purchase. These class differentiations between those who can consume and those who cannot, make Cubans question the value of their citizenship (Porter 2008). In addition, there is unequal access to remittance-sending networks, which has contributed to this dramatic rise in inequality in the distribution of income (Eckstein 2004). This is an undesirable outcome for the Cuban government, which has focused on promoting national pride and equality. The socialist notion of a class-less society in Cuba is now challenged by an increasingly visible inequality between people in state-paid jobs, and those who have access to convertibles or foreign currencies (Adams 2008).

While there are growing social differences among Cubans, “tourism apartheid” is perhaps one of the most visible division that has occurred as a result of tourism (Babb 2010). In many developing countries, the mainstream of tourists enjoys a more luxurious lifestyle than the locals. The contrasts between tourists and locals in Cuba are however, particularly evident (Adams 2008). Fox (2007) argues that there are two very different Cubas. On the one hand there is the country where things do not always work, and where consumer goods are hard to come by, which makes daily life a struggle for many Cubans. On the other hand there are beautiful beaches, luxury hotels and restaurants with imported goods. Many of these places are only available for tourists, and ordinary Cubans are not welcome. The efforts by the government to limit contact between tourists and citizens were made for two reasons. First, by isolating the population from tourists, the authorities claim they are protecting the latter from possible criminal activities. The authorities were worried that tourists would choose another destination if the media projected Cuba as a dangerous place. Second, the separation between tourists and locals was made to minimize the threat tourism poses to the revolutionary ideals, especially through prostitution and consumerism (Adams 2008; Taylor & McGlynn 2009). Nevertheless, separation “can serve to undermine the revolution’s claims to promoting social equality” (Babb 2010: 38). Instead of preserving values of equality, the separation between Cubans and tourists emphasises their differences, and creates an even greater gap between “us” and “them”. Contrasts and differences from other groups and individuals play an important role in the formation of identity. “Comparisons between one’s own situation and that of other individuals or groups determine the favourability of the resulting personal or social identity” (Ellemers 2002: 243). According to the social

comparison theory by Festinger (1954), individuals compare themselves with others in order to make sense of themselves, and to measure their own level of success and attribution. The process of social comparison is often unintentional and occurs automatically, and many do not acknowledge their own social comparison activities (Guimond 2005). When people compare themselves to others who they consider worse off, it gives them a feeling of superiority. This often becomes a way for people to enhance their subjective well-being. On the other hand, comparisons with people who have better jobs or more money, confirms the feeling of inadequacy. This is referred to as upward social comparison (Ellemers 2002; Suls & Wheeler 2000). In chapter 3 and chapter 4 I will look more closely at how this relates to the case of Cuba, and how it can throw light upon the comparisons between Cubans and tourists and among Cubans themselves.

Relative deprivation

Many of the Caribbean islands, such as the Jamaica, Dominican Republic, Barbados, Bahamas, have been marketed as tourism paradises since the mid twentieth century, and the substantial scope of tourism has made it a major source of their national income (Duval 2004). Economic instability on these islands has enhanced the importance of tourism as an alternative development strategy. Although tourism has contributed positively to the economy, its benefits have been under intense scrutiny. There is, for instance, much concern over the dependency it creates, and many have questioned the effect tourism has on the local population (Spencer 2010). In regards to tourism, Cuba today shares many of the same experiences as other Caribbean islands, but is unique in the region because of its socialist experience and its tradition of income equality until not so long ago. With the influx of tourism, this socialist idea is being challenged by the increased inequality between those with access to CUC and those without (Bleasdale & Tapsell 2003; Porter 2008).

Surrounded by tourists from all over the world, Cubans are constantly reminded of the opportunities and privileges foreigners have, which many Cubans do not. This goes beyond the access to dollars; it involves a different life style, which is unattainable for most Cubans. It includes staying at luxury resorts, dining at expensive restaurants and going to bars and night clubs. In a study on deprivation, social exclusion and subjective well-being, Bellani and D'Ambrosio (2010) have the following definition of social exclusion:

Social exclusion can be broadly interpreted as the inability of an individual to participate in the basic political, economic and social activities of the society in which she lives due to persistence in the state of deprivation (Bellani & D'Ambrosio 2010: 68).

When people lack the possibility to have living conditions and ability to participate in activities which are common in the society, they are socially excluded. Cubans who are unable to consume products from dollar shops, and who, due to “tourism apartheid”, are excluded from many of the services provided for tourists, experience this as a form of social exclusion. Since Raul Castro took over power in 2006, new reforms were passed, which allow Cubans to visit tourist hotels and restaurants. While this signalled a desire to reduce “tourism apartheid”, Babb (2010) speaks of it as simply a symbolic gesture, as only a few Cubans do actually have the ability to pay for these services. Accordingly, even though Cubans are no longer denied using these facilities, they do not have the money to pay for them, which ultimately leaves them excluded. Unlike the situation where a marginalised minority group is deprived of the majority’s rights, in Cuba it is the majority that is deprived of the minority’s privileges.

While many Cubans feel socially excluded due to their state of deprivation, they are also experiencing a different form of deprivation, referred to as relative deprivation. According to Runciman “the magnitude of a relative deprivation is the extent of the difference between the desired situation and that of the person desiring it” (Runciman 1966, as cited in Podder 1996: 353). Such awareness will result in a sense of dissatisfaction, as well as a sense of entitlement because the individual believes that he/she is not able to enjoy what they deserve (Chipp, Kleyn & Manzi 2011). Runciman points out that we can speak of relative deprivation only when the possibility for obtaining the particular goods desired is realistic. There is therefore a distinction between unrealistic hopes or daydreams, which do not lead to felt deprivation, and reality-based aspirations, which do lead to felt deprivation (Crosby 1976). There has been some disagreement surrounding this particular argument, as Gurr (1970) claims the opposite. According to Gurr, an individual can experience the feeling of deprivation even when he thinks it is not possible to obtain the desired goods. Ultimately, for Runciman (1966) deprivation exists when the perceived feasibility of obtaining the goods is high, while for Gurr (1970) deprivation exists even when the perceived feasibility is low (Crosby 1976).

Income and wealth indicate an individual's ability to consume, and are often the most common criteria for comparisons. Inequality is considered the essential source of discontent and relative deprivation. Relative deprivation occurs when an individual compare him/herself to others within his/her reference group, or when a whole group compare itself to other groups (Podder 1996). As is indicated by the adjective 'relative', comparisons lie at the heart of relative deprivation. Those with whom people compare themselves are always better endowed than the comparers; they are wealthier, luckier, and more successful. The more people compare themselves to others, the more they want for themselves, and when such comparisons are made to individuals or groups who are better off, the dissatisfaction will remain until the individual has achieved the desired outcome (Walker & Smith 2002). Sometimes people compare themselves with others in order to reduce uncertainty about themselves, and to maintain or enhance self-esteem (Ben-Ze'Ev 2000), in which case they choose to compare themselves with people who are worse off. Comparisons with others, who are better off, do however, tend to foster a feeling of envy. Someone may be envious of others because they are considered to have a greater amount of specific goods. According to Ben-Ze'Ev, envy presupposes a certain social comparison, and envy is generated when social comparisons indicate inferiority. Social comparison is not as essential in discontent, as it is in envy. Unlike discontent, which is merely concerned with gaining something, envy is concerned with someone else possessing something the comparer does not have (Ben-Ze'Ev 2000). I have chosen to use the relative deprivation theory as the theoretical framework for my analysis, and later in the thesis I will apply this theory to the empirical examples from the field. I have chosen to do so in order to demonstrate the close link between the social comparisons that take place in Cuba, and the perception of relative deprivation among young Cubans. I believe that many of the changes in Cubans' daily lives can be explained by the increased feeling of relative deprivation.

In 1959, sociologist Davis, who was the first to develop a formal theory of relative deprivation, suggested that "comparisons with ingroup versus outgroup members lead to different kinds of emotional reactions" (Olson, Herman & Zanna 1986: 2). Runciman (1966) introduced a distinction between egoistical versus fraternal deprivation:

Egoistical deprivation refers to the perception that one's own outcomes fall below a subjective standard (usually based on the other individuals' outcome), whereas

fraternal deprivation refers to the perception that one's reference group as a whole is deprived (usually relative to other groups) (Olson, Herman & Zanna 1986: 2).

In this thesis I will primarily focus on the egoistical form of relative deprivation. This is because the observations I made during fieldwork were all comparisons that took place on an individual level, and were made in reference to other individuals, as opposed to whole groups. Crosby (1982) suggested that there are only two preconditions necessary for egoistical deprivation – wanting and entitlement, as these two are immediate causes of resentment. The perception of relative deprivation thus occurs when the individuals feel they are being denied rights and opportunities to which they are entitled. Crosby identified sense of deservingness as “probably most important of all in accounting for the differential frequencies of group and personal deprivation” (1982: 95, as cited in Walker & Smith 2002). When an individual makes comparisons with others, he or she is likely to feel that they deserve the same outcome. This is a point of particular relevance in the case of Cuba. Since the revolution in 1959, the socialist ideology has laid emphasis on social equality between all Cubans and, as shown earlier, the regime has carried out a social policy whose aim is to turn this ideology into reality. As a result, the notion that some Cubans are entitled to rights denied other Cubans is alien to most people in Cuba. Walker and Smith have also pointed out that “relative deprivation is said to be motivated by the desire to rise in the hierarchy of class, status, or power” (Walker & Smith 2002: 14). Until the 1990s, Cuban prided itself for being a society in which class, status and power are not important concerns for the new Cuban people. In the following chapters I will test Walker and Smith's claim against the ethnographic material I have collected.

There has been much emphasis on the comparisons made between Cubans and tourists, mainly because this represents the greatest differences in terms of income and wealth. Eriksen (2008) claims however, that most comparisons take place between people who know each other. After all, “who compares with whom” has a lot to do with “who is in contact with whom” (Ibid.). Applying this to the case of Cuba, Cubans are more likely to compare themselves with their neighbours, colleagues, friends and family, than with foreign tourists. In view of that, the perception of relative deprivation seems to occur at two different levels. The first is between Cubans and tourists. The second is among Cubans themselves, when there has emerged a new group, which has access to foreign currency, and is consequently

better off than the rest. While tourists are important because they represent a different world of opportunities, and are Cubans' main source of foreign currency, they remain anonymous characters that come and leave. The fact that tourists are more privileged than themselves does not upset Cubans that much. Tourists are after all foreign and different. What invokes negative feelings is when their neighbour, whom they have known since childhood, all of a sudden has become more privileged than themselves. Cubans remain each other's significant others, and are therefore more important socially and morally than tourists. A significant other is defined as an individual who is profoundly important in one's life (Andersen et al 2002). "Social comparisons with members of meaningful in-groups often have greater effects on self-evaluations than social comparison with members of out-groups" (Blanton et al 2000, 520). Family, friends, and colleagues who are more important in a person's life, will also to a greater extent affect the person's self-perception. The relations among Cubans are therefore the main focus of this thesis.

The respectability – reputation dualism

In spite of the differences among societies of the Caribbean, Wilson (1973) claims they share certain moral value systems, and he presents a model of the dynamic in their interaction. He claims that there are two moral value systems, two set of ethical guidelines which are in opposition to each other. Wilson refers to the first as *moral of reputation*, and the second as *moral of respectability*. The latter emphasises marriage, the home, self-restraint, work, education, while reputation is based on equality and personal worth (Boucher 2011). This model of contradicting moral systems has often been used in studies of gender in Caribbean societies. According to Wilson (1973) the contradictions in Caribbean households can be described along these lines, where women wish to be respectable, while men are more concerned with their reputation. Women strive to be respectable by doing what the community expects of them, such as keeping a nice home and looking after the children. This is in opposition to what is expected of the men, which is to maintain a good reputation among other men. This is often achieved by spending money and portraying himself as a generous and popular among women. Women and men thus seem to have contradicting interests, which in turn may explain the unstable households (Eriksen 2001).

This distinction between respectability and reputation is frequently used among anthropologists, however, it has also been criticised for being too categorising. Boucher

(2011) argues that Wilson was wrong to equate respectability with women and reputation with men. The contradiction between respectability and reputation may not necessarily be between groups such as men and women, workers and the elite or among ethnic groups. It is rather seen to be a contradiction experienced by everyone. They all have to come to terms with the contradicting demands from the two moral guidelines. This contradiction can be described as a conflict between freedom and the sense of duty (Eriksen 2001).

In this thesis, I use Wilson's theory of the respectability- reputation dualism to show how Cubans often find themselves torn between the two moral systems. Wilson claims that many of the activities, which are most central to the achievement of reputation, are those proclaimed illegal by society. Reputation is often gained according to the degree to which a man undermines and disobeys the legal system of the society (Wilson 1973). I will argue that the growing consumer culture in Cuba is inconsistent with the moral system prevailing in the socialist society. The desire to achieve a better standard of living and a higher social status in society is only achievable by deviating from some of the socialist ideals.

These two opposing value complexes show how an individual can struggle to climb the social ladder, and simultaneously spurn others who have achieved some degree of upward mobility. Wilson (1973) uses the term *crab antics* to describe the absence of social mobility among Caribbean men in lower classes. He uses the image of a bucket full of crabs. They all try to climb out of the bucket, but as soon as one of them has reached the edge of the bucket, the others try to climb on top of him, and consequently, they all fall down back into the bucket, and no one gets out (Eriksen 2001; Wilson 1973). My intention by applying Wilson's theory to the case of young Cubans is to show the existing similarities to the socialism-tourism dualism. I will not go as far as arguing that there is no possibility for social upward mobility in Cuba. I will however, use this theory to explain the dilemma many Cubans experience when their personal desires oppose the behaviour expected of them as revolutionaries in a socialist society.

Chapter 3

The Cuban youth: Between a revolutionary past and an indefinite future

“The first duty of a revolutionary is to be educated.”

Ernesto Che Guevara

Havana and the field

During my fieldwork, I visited four different neighbourhoods of the capital: Miramar, Vedado, Centro Habana and Habana Vieja. These all have their distinctive characteristics and reputations. I lived with two different families in *casas particulares* (private homes) in Vedado, one of the more modern commercial districts in the capital. Before I came to Havana, I knew little about the city, but I had been recommended Vedado due to its convenient location. Here were big hotels, cinemas, bars and night clubs located along the main street Calle 23, also known as La Rampa. I learnt to know this part of the city very well because it was where I went to university, and met most of my informants. We often met at the waterfront, known as Malecon, a popular place for social gatherings. It had become an alternative meeting place for Havana’s youth, who often could not afford to pay the entrance fees at the local bars and clubs. They met there in the evenings after sunset, to share a bottle of rum, sing and play music until the early morning hours. Whenever I walked along Malecon at night, I was certain to meet people I knew. This turned out to be a crucial way for me to meet my informants. My experience was that Cubans were rarely on time, and at the start of my fieldwork I spent a lot of time waiting for people, who were often an hour or two late. It was expensive for them to use mobile phones, so they rarely called to let me know if they were running late or could not make it. Malecon was therefore a good place to go if I was looking for someone, who I otherwise was unable to get hold of.

Although I spent most of my time in Vedado, I also visited other parts of the city when I was invited to people’s homes, or when I just went for walks by myself. By catching the *guagua* (local bus) or a *machina* (local taxi), the other parts of the city were easily accessible. When walking through the streets of Havana I could not help but notice the contrasts between the different neighbourhoods. One of these is Miramar, a residential district in the municipality

of Playa. There are many large houses and mansions in this neighbourhood, which before the revolution used to be home to Havana's upper-class residents. Today many foreign embassies and diplomatic residences are located in this part of the city, along the famous *Quinta Avenida* (Fifth Avenue). It was clear from my visits here that this remains one of the more exclusive areas of the city. None of my informants lived in this area, and whenever I went there, it was in the company of other foreigners. Another part of the city, which I often associate with tourists and foreigners, is Habana Vieja, or Old Havana. In 1982 this traditional city centre was put on the UNESCO World Heritage List, and the following year a campaign was launched with the intention to restore the authentic character of the buildings (Taylor & McGlynn 2009). Habana Vieja is popular for sightseeing. Tourists are drawn to this part of the city to see the renovated colonial buildings and old squares, to walk down the shopping street *Obispo* and visit sights such as the famous Floridita and Hotel Ambos Mundos. The places surrounding Parque Central is therefore a popular place for Cubans to come in contact with tourists.

Centro Habana is located between Habana Vieja and the newer part Vedado. This district has fewer tourist attractions, and is mainly a residential and commercial area, with office buildings, hotels, bars and night clubs. The narrow streets with overhanging balconies are normally very crowded, with passing traffic in all directions. Whenever I walked through this part of the city, I always noted the high sound level from cars, music and salesmen shouting in an attempt to sell their products to passers-by. Many of the buildings in this area are in very bad conditions, and in need of renovation. Along the Malecon there are several on-going restoration projects. I often walked along Malecon to avoid the crowded streets, and the fresh breeze from the sea made the walk more enjoyable. The restoration projects seemed to progress slowly, and I was told it was due to insufficient funding. While Cuba has established a well-recognised education - and health care system, renovation of Havana's many colonial buildings has not been a priority due to lack of capital. Centro Habana also has the highest population density in Havana. Today there is a severe shortage of housing. In the land of socialism, where everyone is entitled to housing, Havana cannot provide enough homes to meet the demand. The government has in fact implemented a prohibition against moving to the capital city from the countryside. As a result of this ban, very few people move in and out of the different neighbourhoods, and many families live in the same houses for generations (Holgersen, 2010). Since the houses and properties are redistributed through the state, it is not

uncommon for Cubans with different financial backgrounds to live in the same neighbourhoods. This means that Havana has less obvious distinctions between poor and rich localities, compared to other Caribbean cities (Underlid 2012).

Despite the shortage of housing for Cubans, this is not the case for foreigners. A high number of white and blue signs hang outside people's houses, indicating to tourists and others that this is a licenced *casa particular*. It means that the owner has paid a fixed per-room annual tax and has permission from the state to rent out rooms. The price ranges from 10 to 30 CUC a night, depending on the standard and location. For some, renting out private rooms has become their primary occupation, while others have it as a secondary source of income. The business is often run by the owner of the house, or by other family members. The families who rent out rooms in their homes often enjoy a higher standard of living than Cubans who do not have as easy access to CUC. These houses have often been renovated and freshly painted, in order to make them more appealing for tourists. The numbers of *casas particulares* and *paladares* have increased significantly in recent years, and the competition is high, particularly in the off-peak season, when the number of visitors is low. Selling food and renting out a room or two to tourists has become popular ways for Cubans to supplement their income. While these enterprises are regulated by the state, there also exist numerous illegal methods (Adams 2008). One way or the other, Cubans find new ways to earn extra money, and only the imagination seems to place limitations on these methods.

A man with such an alternative income was Dennis. He was a 28 year old musician; a very talented one as far as I could tell. Five days a week he played with a band at a hotel in Vedado. We met there one night while I was waiting for a friend in the hotel lobby. From time to time I stopped by right before the band finished playing, and afterwards we would have a coffee or grab something to eat. One night I decided to make a quick stop on my way back to my *casa*. Dennis was just putting his saxophone down as I entered the lobby. He smiled. "*We are finishing early tonight, as you can see, there are not many people here.*" Apart from an elderly couple who seemed to be half-asleep in the corner, the bar was empty. He gathered his instruments and joined me at a table. It was nearly 11 pm and I felt knackered after having spent the entire day in the sun. He, on the other hand, seemed to be wide awake and full of energy. We talked for a while, sharing the latest news since we last met. I asked him about his work, curious whether he would continue to play. Last time we

spoke he had shared his concern that the band might no longer get to play five days a week since it was outside the tourist season. Their meeting with the hotel manager must have gone well, because he seemed much more relaxed. *“I am so lucky to have this job you know, getting to do what I love all day long. I really hope we can continue”*.

Dennis was a music teacher, and he taught children at a music school nearby the university. The children he taught were between the ages of 7 and 16. Dennis himself started playing when he was only 4 years old. He was eager to take on younger children, because he believed the earlier they start to play, the better. Teaching at the school was his official job through the state, where the monthly salary was just under 15 CUC. Living with his mother and his sister in a two-bedroom flat, Dennis was dependent on the extra money he earned playing for tourists. Working every day, and playing every night, he did not seem to have much time to do other things, but I never heard him complain. This is a common situation for many Cubans. Having more than one job is often the rule rather than the exception.

Dennis told me he did not speak English when he got the job at the hotel. He laughed and said he believed his lack of English skills might actually have been the reason he got it in the first place. The manager did not like it when the musicians interact with the tourists. The message had been clear, musicians were there to entertain, nothing else. Despite the manager’s instructions, Dennis did admit that he spoke to the audience during the breaks, and hence, his English had improved significantly. When I asked him why he talked to the tourists, he told me he was interested in knowing where they came from, and to learn more about places outside Cuba. He denied having any intentions of getting tips. Although he knew they could easily afford to give away a couple of CUCs, it was the hotel manager who paid his salary. After all, the entertainment was supposed to be free for guests. His relaxed attitude towards tourists and CUC seemed to work as an advantage for Dennis, and it was appreciated by his audience. A couple of middle-aged women were especially impressed by Dennis, and told me what a nice man he seemed to be. These women felt hassled when people in the streets were fighting for their attention to sell them cigars, handcraft, or offer them a taxi ride. Dennis came across as a little shy, which was a huge contrast to the salesmen in the street, and this characteristic made people relax around him.

Dennis’ story is about a man who worked two jobs in order to achieve his ultimate dream,

which was to one day be able to buy his own place to live. Since November 2011, Cubans were for the first time in more than fifty years allowed to sell and buy their own properties. Till then, if Cubans needed a bigger house, or wanted to move within the country, they had to exchange properties through an agreement with the state. This was often a lengthy and complicated process. It was therefore common for Cubans to arrange property exchanges among themselves, sometimes with a small sum of cash under the table to speed up the process. The new property reform is one of many introduced since Raul Castro took over, and is a part of what he described as adapting to a more modern form of socialism (NRK 2012). For people like Dennis and his family, this new legislation means they can sell their two-bedroom flat, and buy a bigger place, in another part of the city, closer to his work. Dennis was very excited when he heard the news that these new reform would be sanctioned, and he believed it would make a huge difference in his life. In a country where it is common for two or three generations to live together in the same house, this dream might seem unrealistic. Yet, it remained the most important incentives for Dennis to keep his two jobs.

The big bad wolf syndrome

One day I was sitting at a local café on Calle 23, reading while waiting for Jose. The café was a popular meeting place for students and young Cubans. They often came here to drink *mojitos*, listen to music and chat with their friends. After a few weeks in Cuba I had learnt that Cubans are rarely on time, so I always carried a book wherever I went. I had been waiting for about thirty minutes when Jose finally showed up, and gave me the kiss on the cheek, a habit I was not yet accustomed to.

“*What are you reading?*” he asked, while he grabbed a chair from the next table and sat down next to me. He gave a sign to the waiter to bring us two *mojitos*. “*Storeulvsyndromet.*” I said, ready to follow up with an explanation. “*In English it translates to “The big bad wolf syndrome”. It is about the search for happiness in a society of excess.*” By the look on his face I could tell he was still confused, so I attempted to give an example from the chapter I had just read. “*The author writes about how people always tend to compare themselves to others, their neighbours, their friends etc. People think that if they have the same things as the others, like a new car, or a bigger TV, they will be happier. He refers to statistics, which shows that an increase in material standards has not made people any happier, rather the contrary.*” He thought for a second before he said: “*Here in Cuba we are always told that*

material things will not make us any happier, but that does not mean we do not still want them.”

I liked his answer, it was honest. *What type of things do you want?*” I asked, expecting him to mention a car, or a computer or at least a new mobile phone. *“I would like some new shoes”* he said. *“These are old, and a little tight.”* He pointed towards his shoes, and I could see they were worn out. I felt a bit silly for my mistaken assumption, especially since I knew how Jose’s family was struggling to make ends meet. I tried again, this time directing my question more to the Cuban people in general. *“Most young people want electronics like DVD players, laptops and digital cameras etc. Some of my friends get stuff like that from their families living abroad.”* He pointed towards a boy at the next table who was listening to music on his iPhone. I had seen him there before; he was one of the regulars at the café. Jose told me that the boy’s father was from Spain, and that the boy often travelled there to visit him. Whenever he came back he always had a lot of new clothes, a new mobile phone and even one of those scooters that kids use. *“We cannot buy these things here,”* he said, *“but even if we could, they would be very expensive. I could not afford them.”*

About a week later Jose and I were back at the same café, this time in company with his brother Junior. Outside the rain was pouring down, and people were seeking shelter inside the café while waiting for the worst showers to abate. None of us were in a hurry to get anywhere. In fact, I was quite happy to stay and continue the conversation, as it had just reached a topic which sparked my curiosity. The two brothers were the complete opposite of each other. Whereas Jose came across as quite serious and a little shy, Junior was very outgoing, confident and constantly telling jokes. It appeared that Jose was often subject to his brother’s jokes, and this time was no exception. Junior pointed towards the boy with the iPhone. He told me that Jose had been going on about this phone for weeks, and that he was quite certain that Jose would be willing to swap his degree for one if he had the chance. It took me a while to grasp the irony of the statement. Previously, both men had told me that they considered their education almost worthless. With the changes in the employment market, education was no longer as significant, because people often ended up in fields unrelated to what they had studied. Swapping a degree for an iPhone would therefore be considered a good deal for Jose, who no longer saw the value of his education.

I looked over at Jose to see his reaction to his brother’s statement. I noticed he had gone

quiet, and he was clearly uncomfortable with the situation. His brother's story did not coincide with the impression Jose had given me in our previous conversation. I was of the opinion that Jose did not mind the fact that other Cubans had access to certain consumer items, because he did not desire these items himself. Junior's statement did however make me realise that this impression might have been wrong. It dawned on me that even though Jose had not admitted it to me, such comparisons to others seemed to be a source of envy. Jose knew that if he wanted to buy these particular items he could not afford them, and this clearly brought out some negative feelings, which he for some reason had tried to hide from me.

Surrounded by tourists on holiday, who stay at all-inclusive resorts, dine at exclusive restaurants, and enjoy the many amusements Cuba has to offer, Cubans are constantly reminded of their own situation, and all the things they cannot afford. As a result, the desire among Cubans to obtain these material items, as well as the many opportunities tourists have, only increases. Cubans do not necessarily have a lower material standard today than they have had earlier. In fact, Cuba ranks higher than many of its Caribbean neighbours in terms of Human Development Index (United Nations Development Programme 2011), and many Cubans take pride in the fact that Cuba is among the most developed countries in the region. Their situation is however, relatively worse as a result of an expansion of the range of comparison. Even though the situation for most Cubans remain the same, it is made worse when their expectations change as a result of this exposure (Eriksen 2008). It is however, important to stress that Cuba is not too much of an exceptional case in this matter. The rest of the Caribbean countries have experienced a booming tourist industry as well, perhaps even more than Cuba. In terms of relative deprivation due to comparison with tourists they are all in the same boat (Seaton 1997).

While Cubans are increasingly more exposed to contact with tourists, most comparisons still take place, in this society as elsewhere, between people who know each other (Eriksen 2008). Jose is therefore more likely to feel envious of his friend at the café, than of a stranger he meets in the street, and with whom he does not have a close connection. Envy and jealousy are thus inevitable consequences of the growing differences between Cubans, and it is an important reason for the increased desire to enhance their own living situation. This desire often becomes a major motivation for people to pursue jobs within the tourist industry, where there is easier access to convertibles (CUC). For Jose and his family, access to CUC is not a

given. Both his parents were university professors, but with six children their combined salaries were hardly adequate. Since all six children still lived at home, they could not earn extra money by renting out a spare room. The family's only regular extra income was the money the boyfriend of Jose's sister sent them every month. He was from Italy, and they had met while he was in Cuba on holiday. According to Jose, the family was dependent on the extra money, but he did not want to encourage his sister to stay with her boyfriend only for the money.

Marriage between Cubans and foreigners is a controversial topic. The wish to get married lies behind many of the relationships in which Cubans engage themselves with foreigners. Marriage is often considered a ticket out of Cuba, and to a much more comfortable life elsewhere. There is a common perception that Cubans tend to marry for economic reasons and to achieve better mobility abroad.

One afternoon towards the end of my fieldwork, I sat talking to Samuel on the roof terrace in the *casa* where I lived. It was a really hot day, and we had escaped into the shade, enjoying a nice, cool *refresco* (sparkling lemonade). We were talking about our families when he all of a sudden decided to tell me that he was married. I was rather surprised at first, because in earlier conversations he had made it quite clear that he did not believe in marriage. I was also curious as to what made him decide to share this information with me. He explained that he had been married for a year, but only a few of his friends knew about it. He had made the effort to keep it a secret because he did not want to be judged for the decision he had made. From the conversations I had with Samuel and his friends, marriage itself was not something they were concerned about, or even wanted to consider at this stage in their lives. I can therefore understand that being the only married person among his friends, he was worried this would change his friends' opinion of him. Samuel's wife lived in Spain, and this was also where Samuel was hoping to move within the next twelve months. The application papers he needed to fill out were many, and it often seemed like an endless task. Samuel had quit his education before he could graduate. He did this to avoid being tied to the government for two years. In exchange for free education, all graduates are expected to work two years for the government before they can leave the country. Samuel had already waited long enough, and he was eager to leave as soon as the papers were approved, and his wife had bought him a ticket. Through our conversation, Samuel also revealed that his wife was eighteen years older

than him. He must have known what I was thinking, because he answered the question before I had even asked. He said he liked her, but did not love her. He did not try to deny or hide his intentions, he wanted to go abroad, and this was his way of achieving it.

Both Jose and Samuel are examples of how people desire more, and how they believe their lives will be much better if only they have access to certain items that they see others possess. Jose was secretly envious of one of the other Cuban boy because he wanted the same iPhone as he had. Samuel believed his life would be much better as soon as he moved abroad, where material goods would be more easily accessible and affordable on a higher salary. If contentment is seen as a function of access to items that others possess, the book “Storeulvsyndromet”, argues that there is not a linear connection between the two, and that the marginal benefit will decrease as the access to material goods increases (Eriksen 2008). According to this model, the marginal utility is higher for Jose if he got a new pair of shoes that fit, than if he changed his mobile phone for another brand. Whereas this model is considered universal, it is imperative to apply it with care. Many Cubans have only recently gained access to such material goods, which means their situation is fairly different from the global middle class, which Eriksen refers to. It is much easier for someone who already has access to material goods to point out their decreasing marginal benefit. Ultimately, for many Cubans the marginal benefit of possessing these items is still relatively high, but as the consumer culture pervade deeper into the society, it will inevitably decrease, also for them.

Two men, two lives, two futures

Just as we had agreed, Eduardo was waiting for me at the steps in front of the university. I had just finished my Spanish class, though my mind had been rather preoccupied this morning. I had been particularly excited about our meeting this afternoon because Eduardo had asked me if I would like to meet his family. That day he was taking me to his sister’s house in Centro Habana to introduce us. We walked down Neptuno, one of the main streets leading through Centro Habana. We walked in the shade to avoid the burning sensation from the sun. It was mid-day, and the street was fairly quiet. Some women were busy sweeping the pavement outside their houses; a chore they seemed to repeat on a daily basis. Doors and windows were wide open, so everyone on the street had a free view into people’s homes. I noticed an older woman asleep in a rocking chair in front of the television. Next door, someone was preparing a meal. The smell was drifting through the window and out on the

street. It smelled delicious. The residents did not seem to mind the curious gazes from tourists walking past. They just smiled and continued with what they were doing. Without any warning, a bucket of water was emptied from a window on the second floor. We were lucky it did not strike us. Eduardo laughed and reminded me that traffic was not the only thing I needed to look out for when wandering through the streets of Havana. A few blocks further down the street, we walked past a group of older men sitting on the porch. I wondered if they were the husbands of the women we had just passed. The men were playing dominos while drinking rum and smoking cigars, another ritual that seemed to be repeated daily. Everything was *tranquilo* (quiet), and people seemed to have very relaxed mind sets. No one was rushing to get anywhere, or stressing to get things done. It seemed to me that people were just doing their own things in their own time, and whatever they chose not to do today, they could always do tomorrow.

As we approached his sister's house, Eduardo wanted to know how my salsa dancing was going. Eduardo was one of many Cubans who teach salsa to foreigners, and he was happy to hear that I had started taking lessons. As far as I knew, salsa teaching was Eduardo's only source of income. Although he has graduated and is a qualified civil engineer, he claimed there was no work for him in Cuba at the moment. He has therefore had to find an alternative job that can give him some much needed cash. He was waiting for his papers to be sent off to a university abroad, where he wanted to complete a Master's degree. This process had been lengthy, complicated, and expensive. He was very grateful for all the help, both practically and financially, he had received from his friends from abroad. He knew that many Cubans were unaware of the various opportunities that present themselves outside the borders of their own country. In order to realise his dream of studying in another country, he also knew his contacts were crucial.

This is an example of how important contact with tourists have become for many Cubans. Not only is it a source of money, but it is also a gateway to a different life outside Cuba. Eduardo was getting impatient. He had already travelled abroad once, a few years back, and he was eager to leave again. While many Cubans were awaiting changes, Eduardo was not very optimistic that these would happen any time soon. He worried that many young Cubans were setting their hopes on these long anticipated changes, and meanwhile their lives were put on hold. He did not want to wait much longer. With all the uncertainty surrounding

Cuba's future, he said there were no guarantees that these changes would be for the better. Eduardo had prepared himself for a life outside Cuba. While he studied at university he had decided to improve his English. Cubans are taught English at school, but according to my informants, the quality of the English teachers is quite low. Thus, Eduardo started to study English on his own, and used every opportunity to practice with foreigners. This was how he met most of his foreign friends. I was also introduced to Eduardo through a mutual acquaintance.

We stopped outside his sister's home. It was a little flat on the ground floor, in one of Havana's busiest streets. Only a lattice fence separated the tiny flat from the people and the cars outside. In this flat lived his sister, her husband and their two teenage boys on barely 16 square meters. We were invited into the living room, and I was instantly greeted with kisses from everyone. It seemed as if the entire family had been invited for this little gathering. Everyone had questions. They wanted to know where I was from, what I was doing in Cuba, if I spoke Spanish etc. While I tried my best to answer all their questions, and remember their names, I was also digesting the overwhelming impressions of being in a Cuban home. This was completely different from the standard I was enjoying at the place I rented, only a ten minutes' walk from there. Whereas I had my own en-suite with a bathroom and hot water, a big bed and air-condition, this home characterised austerity. There were holes in the walls, electrical wires hanging from the roof, and the flat was sparsely furnished. Looking around the living room, I noticed that most of their possessions seemed to have been gifts from other foreigners, like their clothes, a stereo, DVDs, etc. When seeing Eduardo in the street, looking smart, wearing a shirt, jeans and nice shoes, people would not assume that his family lived under such conditions. On the other hand, looking at their house, one would not expect those who lived there to have laptops or cameras. This seemed to be a common thing in Cuba, where people's appearance, in terms of clothes, make-up, jewellery, gadgets, etc. did not necessarily reflect the standard of their homes. I was surrounded by happy faces and no-one seemed to be concerned with the lack of essentials. His sister was delighted to have me as a guest in her home, and proud to show me the gifts she had received from friends and family abroad. Then she served me coffee in a mug from Ikea. I did not know what to say.

Eduardo's family belonged to the black part of the Cuban population. Even though all Cubans are in theory equal, Eduardo explained that there are visible social class differences.

He said he often experienced discrimination against himself and his family. He was always served last when he was out eating with his friends in restaurants, and had to step aside whenever a white customer entered the shop. He said he was used to it. Blacks are at the bottom of the social ladder. I did notice that there were slight differences between the standard of the homes of my informants who were Afro-Cuban, compared to white Cubans. Whereas I tried to avoid drawing hasty conclusions, I was often reminded by the informants themselves that Afro-Cubans tend to live in more shabby and densely populated neighbourhoods. They are also underrepresented in the best-paying jobs within the tourist industry, which are mainly filled by white Cubans. This racial preference in hiring seems to have exacerbated the inequalities among Cubans (Adams 2008). Berg (2004a) refers to this as a racialisation of the economic hardship; a problem which has not yet been acknowledged by the authorities, who claims racism was eliminated after the revolution. After the crisis in the 1990s, the Cuban government lost much of its legitimacy among its own population, which resulted in a rise in racial discrimination. The black Cuban population may also experience being harassed by the police more often than the white part of the population. At several occasions has Eduardo been stopped in the street by the police when he has been in company of foreign, female friends. He claimed that the police would not have stopped him as often if he had been white or mulatto. He also implied that his family's work opportunities would have been better if they had not been black, but quickly added that it would be wrong to solely blame their skin colour for their difficult financial situation. Ultimately, it comes down to alternative incomes. The size of their home makes it impossible for them to rent out rooms to foreigners, or convert their living room into a restaurant, two of the main ways to gain access to CUC. As a result, the family has to survive on their minimal income, and make do as best as they can.

According to his sister, Eduardo was a good example for his cousins, nieces and nephews. He was well-educated and knowledgeable, and his contacts with foreigners had proven to be very advantageous for the entire family. Another of Eduardo's sisters already lived abroad with her husband and their children. The family was therefore not surprised that Eduardo also wanted to leave. Although they said they would miss him when he left, they supported his decision and wished him the best of luck. Through Eduardo, I was also introduced to some of his Cuban friends. We often spoke about Eduardo leaving Cuba, and although his friends seemed happy that he had this opportunity, I always sensed a hint of jealousy. Whenever

someone like Eduardo uses his contact with tourists to his own advantage, it is inevitable that his friends and family will compare themselves to him, and this often creates envy and jealousy.

Although jealousy was often evident in conversations with Eduardo's friends, this was not always the case. One friend whom I met on several occasions was Juan. He was in his late twenties and lived with his mother and his grandparents in a small flat right on the Malecon. His grandparents were old, and his mother had to stay at home to care for them, which left Juan as the family's sole provider. Juan earned 12 CUC a month working as a lawyer for the government. While this was not an unusually low salary for Cubans, Juan was frustrated. He said 12 CUC was not even enough to cover the family's food expenses. In the Cuban context, under the present circumstances, where low-status jobs in the tourism and service sector were the most lucrative ones, I was curious to know what made people like Juan choose a job as a lawyer over being a waiter, when he knew he could easily triple his salary by choosing the latter. Juan was a firm believer that the situation in Cuba would change, and when the changes happen, Cuba would look fairly different. He believed that in the future there would be more emphasis on the importance of education, and that people would no longer be paid the same salary. I asked Juan if he disagreed with the current system, where in principle everyone received roughly the same salary, regardless of their profession. He thought for a while before he answered. He said he thought the idea behind the system was great because it gave people the opportunity to choose their profession merely based on interest, and not because one job paid more than others. All positions would therefore be filled with people, who had a special interest for the job, which Juan thought would improve their performance. He said the problem with the current system was not that everyone got paid the same, but that no-one got paid enough. If the state salaries had been better, people would want to take the jobs they were originally trained and educated to do. Juan said he was not looking to buy expensive things. All he wanted was to earn enough money to provide for his family, and occasionally go out with his friends. He was happy with his current job and would much rather work as a lawyer than within the tourist sector, jobs he thought was only a temporary solution to earn more money.

In conversations with Juan's grandparents, I quickly realised that they have had a certain influence on him and his perception of life in Cuba. His grandfather, also named Juan, was

nearly eighty years old, and had not only experienced the revolution, but also the years prior to 1959 and the Batista regime. He had many stories to share with us, and I found myself captivated by his narrations. The very detailed accounts of episodes that took place before the revolution, suggested he had a very good memory. By the look on Juan's face, he had heard the stories before and he looked a bit uncomfortable. He politely suggested that maybe the stories should be saved for another occasion. His grandfather on the other hand, seemed to be thrilled by having a new audience, and my questions seemed to make him even more eager to speak. This was a man who did not have any reticence. In fact he had some very strong opinions he wanted to share with me. He thought the youth in Cuba showed no gratitude to the revolution's achievements. "*All they do is to complain*", he said, and shook his head disapprovingly. He understood that the younger generations found it difficult to relate to the idealism of the revolution. After all, they had not experienced Cuba under Batista, and did not have anything to compare with. Growing up during the 'Special Period' had not been easy for them, he said. Basic products became more difficult to obtain, and many blamed the government for the hardship on the island. In his view, the youth had become too obsessed with what they did not have, rather than being grateful for the privileges available to them. He was aware that many young Cubans wanted to leave, and he thought it was a shame that people left because they were unhappy with their current life situation. His message was clear. He thought Cubans should be proud to be Cuban, proud of their culture and their nationality. They should want to stay, want to make a life for themselves, and be less focused on what life they may have, if they leave.

During my fieldwork, I met many of my informants' parents and grandparents. Although they were outside my focus group, conversations with the older generations gave me a better understanding of their view of the current situation, as well as greater insight into family relations. What made Juan's grandfather exceptional, compared to the others I spoke with, was his optimistic view on the future. While many old revolutionaries spend their time recalling the heights of the revolution, and reminding the youth how much better life was back then, Juan's grandfather did not believe the answers to Cuba's problems were to be found in the past.

Young and determined

One day Juana and I were sitting at the local café, drinking lemonade and enjoying the shade.

It was the end of August, one of the hottest months in Cuba. I had not yet been acclimatised, and had suggested to Juana that we should spend the day at the beach. She had just laughed and reminded me that August is the month when most Cubans were off work. This meant that the streets were more crowded than usual, and the beaches outside of Havana would most certainly be filled with Cubans enjoying their time off. Schools had not started yet, and Juana was enjoying her last week of summer vacation before she would start her last year of high school. It was an important year for Juana and her friends, because they were about to choose what path they wanted to take when it came to higher education. For Juana, having to make this choice did not seem to worry her.

“For as long as I can remember I have always wanted to become a film producer” she said. *“I love music and films.”* My first reaction was to ask where. *“Here of course!”* she said, as if there was only one obvious answer. Without any knowledge about the film or music industry in Cuba, I did not know what possibilities there were for jobs, but I imagined they were limited. Instead I asked her whether there were any courses related to this topic, which she would like to take at university. She told me about the course she was applying for, the name of the company she would like to work for, and the people whom she wanted to work with. She had planned it all, and she knew exactly where she wanted to be in five years’ time. With the ambiguity surrounding the future of most young Cubans, Juana stood out as an example of a young girl who did not see any real obstacles that might prevent her from achieving her dreams. This is what she explained to me:

“Many of my friends want to leave Cuba as soon as they finish high school. They do not believe there are any opportunities for them here, and they believe they have to go abroad in order to realise their dreams. It is sad, because I am going to miss them. Cuba is my home, and I do not want to leave.” Her English was flawless, and she spoke French as well as Spanish. On a weekly basis the two of us met for language lessons. She helped me with my Spanish, and I helped her with German pronunciation. She was so eager to learn, and it was a true inspiration to meet a 17 year old girl, who was so confident and so sure about what she wanted in life.

Juana’s parents were divorced, and she lived with her father in a flat centrally located in Vedado. One night, when I was around for a late supper, her father told me that for some time

now he has considered moving to the United States. Both his brothers lived in California, and he explained that the only reason he was still in Cuba was because of Juana. Now that she would soon finish high school, he considered it the right time for them to move. He cited a list of prestigious universities at which Juana could study. He did not mention how he intended to fund her education though. I could sense that he was hoping for me to agree with him. He obviously knew his daughter well, and was aware of how persistent she could be. I wondered if he was counting on my help in order to persuade her. From what I knew of Juana, any attempt of persuasion was likely to be unsuccessful.

Juana was my youngest informant, and yet she was the one with the clearest idea of what she wanted to do with her life. While her friends were dreaming about leaving Cuba, and getting jobs abroad, Juana had decided she wanted to stay. I wanted to know what made a 17 year old girl so determined. When I asked her whether she was a member of *Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas*, (Young Communist League), she seemed very surprised, which made me wonder if I had crossed a line by asking that particular question. When I first arrived in Cuba, I was very careful, and I always tried hard to avoid questions concerning Cuban politics. Juana was just so easy to talk to though, that it had not even occurred to me that this question could be perceived negatively. She must have sensed my anxiety. She smiled at me, and explained that the reason why she was surprised by my question was because not many foreigners are familiar with the youth party. She said she was not a member of the party, so that was not the reason why she wanted to stay. “*So why do you want to stay?*” I asked. She laughed. She knew I was looking for answers that could explain her decision, a justification for her choice. “*I love my country*”, she simply said. “*That is why*”.

Salsa

“*Same time on Thursday?*” Diana asked me after checking her calendar. I was in a dance studio in Habana Vieja, and had just finished a two hour salsa lesson with her and her husband, Enrique. We met a few weeks earlier at 1830, an outdoor salsa place at the end of Malecon. I had been there with some friends, as we were told it was the place to be if we wanted to practice salsa. I saw Diana dancing with her husband, and I was instantly mesmerised by her moves. I had never seen anyone dance as beautifully as she did. I saw it as an opportunity, and asked her if she would take the time to give me some lessons.

"You are getting better" she said, and smiled at me. At our first lesson we were both laughing at how little rhythm I had, so she seemed pleasantly surprised by my slight improvements. *"Do you teach many foreigners?"* I asked, secretly hoping the answer was yes, which meant I might not be her most hopeless student. *"It is about fifty-fifty. The foreigners often come here in groups, and we teach them every day for two or three weeks. We also teach Cubans."* Even though I had asked the question, I was a little surprised to hear that they actually taught Cubans too. *"I had the impression all Cubans already know how to dance. It is in your blood, isn't it?"* She laughed, *"You would think so, but many also want to learn how to teach."*

Diana was in her late twenties, and had studied dance at the University of Havana for five years. This qualified her as a professional dance teacher. She continued. *"Many people quit their jobs because they know they can earn more money teaching salsa to foreigners. It has become a problem lately, there are too many teachers. We notice it here because foreigners get better deals from others. As a private teacher you can charge less because you teach in your own home. We cannot compete with the rates because we have to pay the rent for our studio."* *"It is ironic"* said Enrique, who had been sitting silent next to me, listening to our conversation. *"We teach other Cubans so they can become teachers, and as a result we lose our students to them. Still, we depend on their money, so we cannot afford to turn them away."*

Before I started taking salsa lessons, I had never thought of salsa teachers as a job within the tourist industry. During my stay I met several people who offered to teach me for a few CUC per hour. Even though I was very happy with my current dance teachers, I did agree to take a few lessons with others just out of curiosity. These lessons took place in their living rooms, where chairs and tables were moved to the side, and the music was played on a small CD player. It was far from the professionalism I experienced with Diana and Enrique, but I could understand how tourists might appreciate the charm.

One such salsa teaching couple was Luis and Adriana. They were both architects, but gave up their careers a few years ago, and started to teach salsa. Luis told me that it was very tough at the beginning, because it took them some time to build up a reputation as salsa teachers. They were dependent on good recommendations from their students, and friends and family often

helped them by putting in a good word, and urging tourists to try some salsa lessons. Adriana was very happy with their arrangement. Since their work schedules were much more flexible, she got to spend more time with their two young children. Their income had also increased considerably compared to what they earned while they were both working as architects. They had a lovely home with nice and fairly modern furniture. They told me that they earned more than the average Cuban salary. When I was around their house, I could tell Adriana was proud to serve me Coca Cola rather than the cheaper, Cuban version TuCola. She enjoyed the extra luxury they could afford now that they had better and greater access to CUC. Whereas I rarely went to restaurants with my informants where we had to pay in CUC, Luis always insisted on eating at an Italian restaurant close to Parque Central, where the clients were mainly tourists. He clearly enjoyed being able to bring his family there, and chatted away with the waiters and waitresses the way regular customers do. I recall these restaurant visits as one of the most distinct examples that categorised this family as part of the Cuban middle class. Their access to CUC through salsa teaching had allowed them to become a part of the new, emerging middle class, and to enjoy a higher standard of living than that of many other Cubans.

Jinetera

Another round of drinks was brought to their table. She was sipping her daiquiri, while he attempted to put sun tan lotion on himself. She laughed at his jokes, although I severely doubted she understood what he said. I had been listening to their conversation, or rather the lack of it. He did not speak a word of Spanish, and her English was restricted to monosyllabic answers. It was one of the hottest days in Cuba since I arrived, so I had decided to make use of the swimming pool at Hotel Nacional, one of the most famous hotels in Havana. It was located in Vedado, and was a popular place for tourists, who want to stay at the same hotel where Winston Churchill and Frank Sinatra once stayed. While the hotel itself hosts a lot of history, the atmosphere by the swimming pool was distinctively foreign. Few Cubans would get the pleasure of using these facilities, unless they were in the company of a foreigner. I had just gone for a swim, and I was observing the couple from the shade of the parasol. They were both sharing the same sun bed, and their bodies could not possibly get any closer, she was practically lying on top of him. Every time he said something, she giggled. They reminded me of a couple on their honeymoon, who just could not get enough of each other.

Her name was Vanessa and she had just turned 19. He on the other hand, I knew little about, but his accent told me he was most likely German. I made a rough guess that he was in his mid-50s, and was probably travelling on his own. Later that week Vanessa told me they had met at the club, Casa de la Musica a few days earlier. He bought her a drink, and she agreed to stay for the night. Such stories would normally have initiated a much more startled response from me, but after a few months in Cuba I was no longer surprised.

Vanessa and I met at a house party during my first week in Havana. We were introduced by a mutual acquaintance, and her first response had been to drag me to the dance floor, insisting on teaching me how to dance salsa. My first impression of Vanessa was that she was a very open and outgoing person, not afraid to get in contact with new people. Other than that, she seemed just like any normal teenager, enjoying herself in the company of her friends. The second time we met she was accompanied by a Russian man in his 60s. They were dining at one of the restaurants at Melia Cohiba, another prestigious hotel in Vedado. Then there were the two Canadians, and the Italian. When we were finally alone, I was not quite sure how to bring up the subject with Vanessa. I was very curious of her story, but I did not want her to feel uncomfortable, nor did I want her to think that I in any way was judgemental. She knew I had seen her at the hotel on several occasions, so she instantly put all her cards on the table.

Prostitute, call girl, escort, or *jinetera*? I did not know what the right term to use was. My first response had been to ask why. What did she see in these men? Was it purely for the money, or had she ever actually been attracted to any of them? How much did she earn? Did she think it was worth it? What about her family and friends? Did they know that she was doing this? I had so many questions. I kept thinking to myself that perhaps some of these questions were a bit inappropriate, but then again, if Vanessa agreed to exchange sex for money, I did not think she would have a problem answering my questions. She seemed pretty relaxed and content, and told me that she had no regrets. She knew she was young and good-looking, and wanted to take advantage of that as long as she could. Just as so many other girls at her age, Vanessa was dreaming about getting an education, a career, and eventually a family. She wanted to become a veterinarian, but had put her studies on hold indefinitely. First she just wanted to enjoy her life. She made it very clear to me that she was not one of those girls who hooked up with tourists in order to get married and leave Cuba. She enjoyed the luxury and the extravagant life style many of these men could offer. The expensive

dinners, the night clubs, and access to some of Havana's finest hotels; none of this would be obtainable for her if it had not been for their company.

I was curious to know how it was to work with these men. Where and how did they meet? How did she know who to approach? How did they arrange the payment? She told me that she normally hung around the hotels, bars and night clubs where foreigners were most likely to appear. She often went with a group of friends, and they usually dressed in short, tight dresses, which left little to the imagination. It was important to be noticed, as there were many girls who competed for these men's attention. Sometimes she made the first move, but most of the time she waited until he did. It normally started with a drink, followed by dancing. When the men did not speak Spanish, dancing was often a great way to create a connection. It was not always necessary to talk in order to have a good time together, she said. *"Some men can be really disrespectful and think that just because they have more money, they can treat women like trash. Most of the men are nice though. They are travelling alone and are looking for company. They treat me like a lady, not a prostitute"*, she said, *"and besides, it is not always about sex."*

Vanessa lived with her mother in a small one bedroom flat close to *el barrio Chino* in *Centro Habana*. She had never met her father, who left her mother right before Vanessa was born. Rumour said that he had met another woman and moved to Europe. Vanessa was an only-child and felt she had to make a contribution to supplement her mother's low income. Vanessa's mother was aware of how her daughter earned her money. While Vanessa and I often discussed the substance of her line of work, I only spoke to her mother about it on a few occasions. She did not have much to say, but she was very clear in her opinion that Cuba's economic situation and the state structure did not give Vanessa another choice. Also some of Vanessa's friends knew about her ways of earning money. When a girl like Vanessa all of a sudden had huge sums of cash, new clothes and expensive jewellery, people would instantly assume that she worked as a prostitute. She explained to me that there were no other ways for someone like her to earn that amount of money. She was not ashamed of it. Everyone has to make a living, she said, and when she earned ten times as much as her friends working in government jobs, she did not see why she should be looked down upon for choosing what she considered the best paying alternative. She also said there was one added advantage to this job. There were many other alternatives that gave access to CUC, however in company of

foreign tourists Vanessa also got to take part in the luxury life style. Being allowed to use the swimming pool at Hotel Nacional, have drinks at Floridita, and watch a dance show at Tropicana, were just as important incentives for Vanessa to do what she did. She said she was not just after the money; she wanted the entire tourist experience.

I did not want Vanessa to think that I was judging her, so I shared a story with her from my days as a student in London. One of the girls I met there was working as a call girl while she studied at the university. By the time we all graduated she had already paid off her student debt. Although prostitution in England is commonly frowned upon, her friends did not judge her for the controversial method she used to finance her studies. After all, she was in a much better financial situation than any of us, and if anything, we were probably a bit envious of the fact that she was debt free. People's perception of what is acceptable may change when the financial aspects are considered. Although Vanessa's mother did not encourage her daughter to work as a *jinetera*, she accepted it, and somehow tried to justify her daughter's situation by placing the blame on the political system. By claiming that Vanessa had no other choice as a result of the difficult economic situation in Cuba, she tried to present her daughter's situation as more acceptable than if she had made the choice herself.

An interesting question for me was how Vanessa experienced working as an escort in a society like the Cuban, where prostitution had been severely stigmatised by the authorities. After the revolution the government claimed to have eliminated prostitution, which was considered an evil result of capitalism. Her line of work did therefore clearly run counter to the socialist values of the 'New Man', both in terms of accepting money for sex, and for striving to become part of the privileged group, who can enjoy a more luxurious life style than ordinary Cubans. Vanessa explained that her friends did not have a problem with what she was doing. In fact some of them, both men and women, were involved in the same type of work themselves. She said the older generations were more likely to judge since they held the revolutionary values higher than many younger Cubans. Through my conversations with my informants I often asked what they thought of *jinetismo*. The opinions were divided, and some said they disapproved of such activities. For instance, Jose claimed that about 40 % of Cuban women were working as prostitutes, and he thought this was damaging to Cubans' reputation abroad. While the credibility of this percentage is uncertain, his statement shows how some Cubans were concerned with the consequences of prostitution. If tourists are

drawn to the island as a result of the image of Cuban as wild and sexual creatures, this will attract an unwanted kind of tourism. At the same time, some tourists might be discouraged to visit Cuba due to its reputation as a sex tourism destination (Bye & Hoel 2006). Since my informants seemed to be split in their views on *jineterismo*, it made me wonder to what extent Vanessa's claim of acceptance was accurate. By claiming to have a certain level of acceptance among friends and family, Vanessa might be trying to portray her activities as more common, and less controversial, than they really were. The support and understanding from others whom she was close to, may also have served as a justification and legitimation of what she did.

Chapter 4

The survival of revolutionary values in a transitional Cuba

*“Man loves liberty, even if he does not know that he loves it.
He is driven by it and flees from where it does not exist.”*

Jose Marti

Challenging stereotypical perceptions

In the previous chapter I introduced some of my informants, and tried to give accounts which describe their current situation. While they all have different backgrounds, professional skills, jobs, and dreams for the future, they do have one thing in common. Everyone is influenced, in one way or another, by the effects of tourism. Many of my informants were striving to earn CUC. This was achieved through alternative jobs, such as playing in bands for tourists, teaching them salsa, or more controversial methods collectively known as *jineterismo*. The increased focus on foreign currency has led many Cubans to leave their more traditional professions and assume low-skilled jobs within the tourist industry. Although the salary is not much higher than in other professions, these jobs do give informal access to CUC in the form of tip (Eckstein 2009). This shift is what Eckstein refers to as a domestic brain drain, one of the negative consequences of the expanding scope of tourism. The scale is considered so pervasive that the Cuban government refers to the result of this shift in occupation as the “inverted pyramid”, to capture the deteriorating return on its investment in education (Ibid.). The government has taken some action and implemented prohibitions for certain professions to work in the private economy, such as doctors and teachers. However, this policy may also have some negative effects, as it discourages the youth to pursue education altogether. Whereas education is intended to improve people’s work opportunities, with the growing appeal towards low-skilled jobs, education has become less important (Chomsky 2010). Both Jose and Junior’s views agree with this claim. They did no longer see the value of their education because more money could easily be earned through employment which was unrelated to their studies. Monreal (2002) argues that the current trend in Cuba shows a low level of efficiency, because the country does not utilise its best economic asset, which is its

highly educated and qualified work force. Since access to CUC has become such a prominent factor in Cubans decision to leave their traditional professions in favour of low-skilled jobs within tourism, a raise in the state salary is arguably the best way to make traditional jobs more appealing. Unless traditional professions become more alluring to the Cuban youth, the future generations are likely to continue the trend, which means Cuba will suffer an amplification of the prevailing brain draining process.

All of my informants mentioned the inconsistency between the state salary and the prices of essential products such as food, clothes etc. This uneven relationship remains the number one reason for people to seek a second job to supplement their income, or to choose better-paying, private low-skilled jobs. Although there was a common consensus among my informants that a raise in the state salary was required, increasing the state salary will not by itself resolve the situation. First of all, the country's financial situation impaired by the US trade embargo, means that the government does not have the funds to sanction such a raise. Secondly, while a raise in the state salary would increase the purchase capacity of the population, it would not eliminate the already escalating social inequalities. Since the state salaries are paid in CUP, only parts of the population will be able to buy the products sold in CUC shops. Thus, the inequalities among Cubans themselves will not vanish. It is therefore not only enough to raise the state salary. If the idea behind the socialist society is for all the inhabitants to be equal, the state needs to implement the regulations necessary to give them the equal opportunities, also when it comes to consumption.

With many structural changes within Cuban society, where people attempt to improve their economic situation, there are also those who want to leave Cuba, in hope that life elsewhere will bring better opportunities. Gifts from family and visitors abroad, contact with tourists, commercial advertisements broadcast on illegal satellite TV, are all portals which nurture Cubans' desire to obtain consumer products unavailable in Cuba. Friends and family who live abroad make Cubans feel isolated from progress, and emphasise their lack of ability to consume (Weinreb 2009). Despite the social services provided by the state, many Cubans want something more, and are convinced that they will get this somewhere else (Ibid.). Before I came to Cuba, I was told that all Cubans wanted to leave the country in search for a better life elsewhere. Field research revealed that this generalisation is vastly exaggerated. While most of my informants mentioned the wish to move abroad, there were only a couple

who were actually planning on realising it. Eduardo was in the process of leaving Cuba to study abroad, while Samuel had married a European woman, with the intention of moving to Spain.

Samuel's situation demonstrates an increasingly more common dilemma for tourists and visitors in Cuba. There is a widespread opinion that many Cubans get married only as a means to get out of the country. There is therefore a growing scepticism towards romances and relationships between tourists and locals. This scepticism also nurtures the assumptions that Cuban men and women who are in relationships with foreign tourists, are only doing this to leave Cuba, or in other ways extort money from foreigners. Whereas Samuel was honest and revealed his intentions behind his marriage, most of my other informants had at some point been in relationships with foreigners, without the objective to move abroad with them. These observations show how the widespread view that Cubans marry foreigners in order to move abroad, gives an incomplete image of these relationships.

While some Cubans are willing to use their connections with foreigners to get out of Cuba, others are more sceptical to the idea of leaving. Their ties to their country, friends and family relations, and the uncertainty of what is waiting for them if they leave, are all factors that may impact their decision to stay. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that not everyone has the option to choose whether they want to stay or leave. Even though some people want to leave Cuba, it might not be possible due to lack of resources or pending permissions by the authorities. Luis once told me that before he and his wife started teaching salsa, he had often dreamt about moving to Europe. Their combined salary was so low that they could barely afford to buy breast-milk substitute to their new born baby. They discussed their options at length, but concluded that being close to their families was very important to them, and they did not want their children to grow up miles away from their grandparents. They were also worried that their children would grow up with little connection to their Cuban culture and heritage. In an attempt to improve their situation, they decided to change jobs to ensure that their children could enjoy a better life than their state salaries could offer. Family ties and the pride of being Cuban were therefore important factors in the family's decision to stay. On balance, the advantages of staying in Cuba were considered greater than the disadvantages. Since both Luis and Adriana earned a higher salary by teaching salsa, they were in a better financial situation than many Cubans. This factor had also played a significant role because it

allowed the family to achieve a higher standard of living.

Juana had a very strong opinion that she wanted to keep living in Cuba. She was still in high school and did not have to worry about how she would earn a living yet, but she had high ambitions for her career. In contrast to those Cubans who often complained about the lack of opportunities on the island, Juana was a girl with much enthusiasm about her own future. As mentioned earlier, I had asked Juana whether she was a member of the communist youth party. Looking back at our conversation, I realise how wrong I was to assume that Juana's desire to stay in Cuba was connected to political support of the regime, and to overlook her emotional ties to Cuba. It would have been just as wrong to claim that everyone who leaves Cuba is dismissive of the regime. Although Juana did not agree with all the aspects of the contemporary politics, her pride of being Cuban and attachment to her country were important reasons for her decision to stay.

In any authoritarian state, official statistics or surveys that demonstrate the level of support, or lack of support for the regime, are unobtainable. Even if such surveys were available, their credibility would be questioned. Without such surveys it is difficult to get an idea of how satisfied Cubans in general are with the current regime, and whether the level of support has changed since 1959 (López 2002). Weinreb (2009) undertook an ethnographic study of what she called Cuba's "silent majority". She defines this group as the white and well-educated Cuban middle-class, who are dissatisfied with the current political and economic system. This dissatisfaction has led to an increasingly negative relationship to the state, but rather than resulting in protests and demands, they withdraw into themselves and remain silent. She claims that there is an on-going alienation from Castro's vision of a socialist Cuba, and that due to surveillance, travel ban, high prices, and restricted consumer options, these silent-majority Cubans feel trapped, both as citizens and consumers (Weinreb 2009). Because of the restrictions placed upon their freedom to express their dissatisfaction, and the lack of means through which they can precipitate alterations, many Cubans believe that change is an unlikely outcome. Nevertheless, the relationship between the state and the individual has changed through the course of the Castro regime.

Since the revolution the state has played a significantly large part in Cubans' lives. The state has provided its citizens with food, clothes, housing, heating, education, health care and jobs.

The state has also been responsible for the surveillance in society, which to a great extent placed restrictions on people's mobility and freedom of speech. Much of the support for the regime in the early years of the revolution was tied to the social improvements achieved by the state's increased presence. The deteriorating foreign relations with the US also enhanced the sense of nationalism among Cubans, which led to further support of the regime (Sierka 2007). Even though the welfare state in Cuba has been praised for its achievements, it has also been criticised for restricting the individual freedom and personal responsibility. Because the government's presence has been so strong, the people have become very dependent on the social services it provides. This has in turn limited people's abilities to provide for themselves (Ibid.). Furthermore, subsidised unemployment compensations and pensions plan make the idea of work less appealing, and eventually it loses its significance. The salaries in the traditional sectors are so low that many Cubans have given up work, because they see it as a burden. They would rather depend on the state to subsidise them as much as possible. Work within the tourist sector with access to CUC, is for many Cubans the only incentive to work. As the economic situation worsened, the government was no longer able to provide social services to the same extent as before. Since Cubans had to assume more of this responsibility themselves, alternative sources of income became more prevalent than before. Weinreb (2009) claims that engagement in activism as a means to raise their standard of living is too risky given the likelihood of government reprisal. In the absence of public discussions, elections and freedom of assembly, many Cubans feel frustrated. They blame the government for the economic hardship, and claim they are forced to resort to illegal activities in order to compensate for the lack of state support.

Vanessa's mother did for instance blame the state for her daughter's unfortunate situation. She rarely mentioned how Vanessa earned her money, but was very eager to tell me about her nephew, who had recently graduated and worked as a paediatrician. I sensed that she was a little embarrassed about Vanessa's source of income. By placing the blame on external factors, she found a justification for her daughter's choice. This way of rationalising Vanessa's situation can be seen as an attempt to explain to others that ultimately Vanessa was not responsible for her choice, but had to make her living this way due to lack of alternatives. Nevertheless, according to Vanessa she had chosen this type of work over any other job, and claimed that it had been her own choice. She acknowledged the difficulties of surviving on a state salary, but she also reminded me that it is up to each person to choose how to

supplement their incomes. If she had been embarrassed, or disagreed with prostitution as a way to earn money, she would have chosen another option. For Vanessa access to CUC, as well as being part of the tourist experience, were considered more important factors than how such activities were contradicting the socialist values of being a good revolutionary. When I asked her if she ever felt conflicted due to the moral dilemma of choosing this job, her answer was much more reflected than I had expected: *“I am not doing this out of spite or disrespect of the revolution, but I believe that Cubans should be allowed more individual freedom to think and act for themselves.”* She did not like the way the authorities were dictating what was considered anti-revolutionary behaviour. *“I honestly believe that most Cubans would be more supportive of the regime if they were allowed more freedom. Just because people want the freedom to travel does not mean that they will all leave Cuba for good. They just want to have the opportunity. Many Cubans feel that the authorities are controlling them with their policies and reforms, which only fosters dissatisfaction. The people need to feel that the authorities are on their side, and that their policies are intended to serve them and their interests.”* She clearly saw her own situation as a part of a bigger picture. *“Sometimes it seems as we [Cubans] are like children, whose parents [the authorities] do not believe we are old enough to think for ourselves and make the right decisions. That is why they are unwilling to ease the rules. They think we will turn our country capitalist over night.”* Vanessa’s metaphor was interesting. She saw the authorities as parental figures, whose role it was to look after and provide for their citizens. At the same time, she believed Cubans needed more freedom to make decisions based on individual desires. There seemed to be a constant battle between promoting socialist ideals and allowing people more individual freedom, even if it meant deviation from socialism.

In contrast to Vanessa, Juan was one of many young Cubans, who did not have direct access to CUC. He had to get by on his state salary, without any remittance from friends or family abroad. He was proud of his education, and would not consider giving up his job as a lawyer in favour of a job as a waiter. Juan did not want to leave Cuba, but was hoping for changes that would make their life situation better. Even though Juan was not involved in any activities directly linked to tourism, he was surrounded by people, whose focus was increasingly on how to earn more money and to improve their economic situation. In my encounters with Juan, he never expressed any envy towards his friends, or other Cubans who were better off than himself. To me, Juan seemed to be a hard-working young man, who was

content with his situation.

Since much of the focus in the research is directed at how tourism created a perception of relative deprivation among Cubans, it was surprising to me to meet someone who did not seem to feel deprived. It has occurred to me to wonder whether Juan might have tried to appear more satisfied with his situation than he really was. By claiming to be happy and contented, he was justifying the choices he made. Juan explained his own decision of not seeking a job in the tourist industry by saying he was proud of working as a lawyer. He wanted to use his education. This was one of his most important arguments for why he stayed in his traditional job, rather than seeking a better-paying alternative. Juan was also an advocate for the socialist idea of equality. He did not agree with the current trend where people earn more money being a tourist guide than being a doctor. Juan knew that although he kept to his traditional profession, the social effects in society would remain small, as long as others continue making money their first priority. He said that it was his family that suffered the most as a result of his choice. He saw it as another tragic outcome of his effort to “do the right thing”, as he put it.

As these observations show, the stereotypic views of Cuba and Cubans do not always correspond to reality. Far from all Cubans want to leave their country, and among those who do want to leave, not everyone is willing to engage themselves in relationships or marriage to foreigners in order to get out. I stress this because I think it is important to emphasise how the reality in Cuba is much more nuanced than many believe. This is also the case when it comes to Cubans’ attitude towards the current regime. While it is true that many of those who decide to leave Cuba are dissidents, we must be careful not to place everyone in the same category. As is the case with those who wish to keep living in Cuba, those who wish to leave have various motivations and can be supportive or non-supportive of the regime. Since the Cuban government has had the same front figures since the start of the revolution, Cuba is easily associated with Fidel and Raul Castro. This makes Cuba differ from other countries with more frequent changes of government. Nevertheless, the pride of being Cuban and the patriotism present among many young Cubans are not necessarily equivalent to the support of the regime. Many may be proud of their country and their culture, and yet disagree with the policies of the current government. These factors are important in order to get a more nuanced understanding of Cubans society, and to avoid stereotypic presumptions.

Status and social class

Income, residential area, and education are the main criteria of class differentiations (Taylor & McGlynn 2009). Cuba has since the revolution claimed to be a classless society, with minimal differences in income, properties and assets. Since the government started to encourage tourism as an alternative source of state income, the CUC became increasingly more important in Cubans' lives. Because some Cubans have easier access to CUC than others, this has created a group of people who represent a new middle class. With this emerging middle class, there has also been a rise of a consumer culture, which again is considered a threat to the revolutionary values promoted by the Castro regime (Taylor & McGlynn 2009).

Material possessions are indicators of people's economic status. Some goods are considered more valued than others, and have the effect of making the owner see themselves as different from others, as well as making others see them as such (Taylor & McGlynn 2009). What people consume reflects who they are, and who they are trying to pass themselves off as. It also reflects on how others ascribe, or deprive someone social values, based on what they buy or own. Consumption of a product is not merely buying a commodity, but it is also the purchase of the specific lifestyle this product represents (Ibid.). In most societies, consumption of goods is a key element in the formation of social identity. The motivation behind consumption is closely linked to the desire of living what the person views as a better life. Greater access to economic resources allows the individual to have a specific lifestyle, and do specific things that would not have been possible without such access. Success is often measured in terms of what someone owns, and how it is used. Wearing new clothes, or having a computer, or a new car, shows that the person has money. I noticed that it was common for young Cubans to spend a lot of money trying to create an impression that they are climbing up the social ladder. It is therefore not always about actual social mobility, but the wish to show others that they belong to a higher class than the one they identify themselves with. The visual is therefore an important aspect, where the youth in some contexts attempt to present themselves as more privileged, and with better access to economic resources, than what is the reality. To give an impression of material wealth is a way to compensate for the lack of economic resources, because many measure success in terms of consumption.

This was also the case for Vanessa and her friends, whose focus was on clothes, make-up and jewellery. For them it was important to present themselves as well-off, and they achieved this by spending their money on products that would normally only be available from “dollar shops”. Both Vanessa and Eduardo’s family dressed nicely, and wore branded clothes, watches, and purses, which could often give a wrong impression of their economic status. According to Taylor and McGlynn, everyday life in Cuba is “no longer merely about survival and making ends meet; it [is] about obtaining the resources needed to purchase the consumer items “wanted” by *habaneros*” (2009: 6). Cubans’ effort to obtain CUC is therefore mainly driven by their desire to buy products, such as fancy clothes, make-up, perfume etc. These are not considered essentials, but luxury products, which contribute to shaping and defining social status (Taylor & McGlynn 2009).

The restaurant visits I made with Luis and his family are another example of the desire to participate, and be a part of the new middle class. Eating at expensive restaurants is not a common privilege among Cubans, but is rather the exception. By going to this particular restaurant, where the guests are mainly tourists, Luis and his wife demonstrate that they had achieved a higher social status than they previously had. While both Luis and Adriana clearly enjoyed their meal at this restaurant, this way of spending money might also be seen as a way to show other Cubans that they had succeeded. Purchasing luxury goods and services in order to publicly display their economic status to others, is known as conspicuous consumption. This is a way for individuals to “communicate their position in the social hierarchy” (Chipp, Kleyn & Manzi 2011: 118). This term often overlaps with status consumption, which refers to products acquired for the purpose of gaining status. For those who have not yet managed to gain a higher social status, purchasing a certain amount of luxury products gives others the impression that they belong to a higher social class than they really do.

Luis and Adriana never implied that eating at their favourite restaurant or buying foreign products were forms of conspicuous consumption. It would therefore be injudicious to draw such conclusion without any further evidence supporting this claim. After all, they had just risen in the social hierarchy and were happy to finally enjoy a better life style than they did before. Nevertheless, Luis and Adriana’s story is an example that supports Walker and Smith’s claim that relative deprivation is motivated by the desire to rise in the social hierarchy. Before the two started to teach salsa, they were struggling to make ends meet.

When they compared themselves to other Cubans, who earned more money than themselves, they felt even unhappier with their own situation. According to Luis, this had been their main motivation for changing careers. With the perception of themselves as relatively deprived, they eventually decided to make the changes necessary in order to improve their own economic situation.

Comparisons and relative deprivation in Cuba

Comparisons takes place at all levels in society. Those who are unsatisfied with their situation tend to compare themselves with people they consider to be better off. There are traces of envy, which makes people strive to achieve the social statuses desired. Those who are better off than the majority of the population often compare themselves with those who are not as fortunate. Such comparison strengthens their feeling of superiority and pride of having achieved their desired status. After the revolution, Cubans were more or less equal in income and assets, which gave little or no grounds for envy based on material matters. As the inequalities among Cubans grew, so did the level of envy.

After having had an insight into my informants' lives, it is evident that it is not just Jose who compared himself and his situation with other Cubans. Luis and Adriana were both happy with their current situation, and were pleased to have been able to improve their financial position. They knew they could earn more money and increase their consumption capacity by changing jobs. They wanted a better life style, and made the changes necessary in order to achieve it. Seeing how their lives have changed since they started to teach salsa also served as an important motivation, because it reminded them of how their social status has changed. Diana and Enrique were also earning more money by teaching salsa to foreigners than if they had been employed by the state. Diana was an educated dance teacher, and her passion for dance played an important role in her choice of career. She did however admit that her decision to teach foreigners rather than Cuban school children was primarily based on the higher income this opportunity presented. She had compared the state salary with the salary she would earn teaching foreigners, and this computation was an important element in her decision. Dennis was another of my informants who was also able to work with one of his passions, which was music. He had to work two jobs in order to earn enough money to provide for his mother and his sister, but enjoyed them both because he was able to teach and play music. Both Dennis and Diana had therefore chosen their careers based on their

interests, and not merely because they paid better. Dennis was particularly focused on how lucky he was since he was able to make a living by doing what he enjoyed the most. He compared himself to his friends, who were taxi drivers and tourist guides. In his eyes, they were less fortunate, because they did not have the same passion for their jobs as he had. This was a factor he considered very important.

People evaluate their circumstances depending on who they compare themselves with. Comparisons are the essential means in people's assessment of their own situation (Seaton 1997; Swarbrooke 1999). In his article on Cuba, Seaton (1997) adapted the relative deprivation theory as the framework for the analysis of the impact of tourism on the host population. Tourism is one of the social phenomena that generate the feeling of relative deprivation. While tourism in itself does not create deprivation, it serves as a medium through which deprivation is perceived. Comparisons with tourists do however, tend to induce a feeling of material deprivation. "Any person or group, that serves as point of reference for an individual is said to stand as a reference group" (Moutinho 2011: 86). Tourists are often seen as the external reference group, which the host population compare themselves with. In some societies such differences between tourists and locals are accepted, and explained away as tourists being different. In other societies the differences may be a source of friction. Cuba is often claimed to be backwards, and many Cubans may precisely feel that they have fallen behind, hence the desire to "catch up" with the rest of the developed world (Seaton 1997). Nevertheless, based on the observations I made, the informants seemed less concerned with the differences between themselves and the tourists. Tourists remain the main source of CUC for Cubans, and play an important role in creating job opportunities. Still, I noted that comparisons with tourists were less common than comparisons with other Cubans. This internal reference group, consisting of friends, family, neighbours and colleagues, had, one way or another, managed to get hold of certain products as a result of an increased income through employment in tourism, or by receiving remittances from abroad. Such comparisons among Cubans tend to create negative feelings. Cubans thus feel deprived in relation to two groups. This indicates that people make references to others, both inside and outside their society (Seaton 1997).

Furthermore, Seaton (1997) claimed that relative deprivation will be more severe in societies with strong government-controlled tourism, because it is politically induced. In socialist

societies like Cuba, relative deprivation is strong because of the highly visible contrasts between tourists and locals. In Cuba this contrast is not only determined by income and access to consumer goods, but also through ‘tourism apartheid’. In order to meet tourists’ expectations of standard, special provisions are made including the construction of new and luxurious hotel resorts and the importation of consumer goods, both of which are unavailable for locals (Seaton 1997). Relative deprivation is also acute in societies where tourism employment is better rewarded than traditional occupations (Swarbrooke 1999). Since uneven access to CUC is highly evident in Cuba, relative deprivation is fostered more easily in this society than elsewhere.

Tourism versus socialism?

During my fieldwork, I travelled to some of the most popular tourist destinations in Cuba, Varadero beach, Las Terrazas, Viñales and Trinidad. These were often short trips for a couple of days, or even day-trips. I mostly travelled with other tourists, as few of my informants could afford such trips. Still, on one occasion I travelled with a mixed group of Cubans and foreigners from my Spanish course. Like myself, my fellow students also lived in *casas particulares*, and when they told their host families they were going to Viñales for the weekend, their host brothers (commonly referred to as *hermanos*) suggested we should all travel together. The transportation on previous trips had been either the tourist buses with guides and air-condition, or we had negotiated a price with a local taxi driver in a less comfortable vehicle. The latter option always turned out to be cheaper, as there were plenty of drivers interested in making money. This time however, we were to travel the ‘Cuban way’. Large trucks with food or other supplies drive to and from the capital every day. All we had to do was to stand by the side of the road, and signal that we wanted a ride. It did not take long before a truck stopped and all nine of us got on it. We sat crammed together on the back of the truck, and could barely hear what was said due to the loud noises from the traffic. The truck dropped us off when it had reached its destination, and we walked along the road while waiting for another truck to drive past. To reach Viñales, we walked several miles and hailed down four different trucks, which all allowed us free rides. The entire journey took us roughly seven hours, including a lot of walking and waiting. It was a huge contrast to trips I had made before, within similar distance. It proved yet again the vast differences between tourists and locals, and how restricted Cubans’ mobility was, even within their own country.

The purpose of my trips was to see and experience more of Cuba, and it also turned out to be a great opportunity to see some of the most popular tourist destinations on the island.

Varadero is a very popular place for tourists who want to enjoy the luxury resorts, the beach and the sun. The resorts have almost everything, such as bars, restaurants, swimming pools, tennis courts, beauty salons, entertainment etc. This means that the tourists rarely need to leave their resorts, and are relatively sheltered from the locals. The tourist experience for those who visit Varadero thus differs from what tourists experience in Havana, since there is more contact between tourists and Cubans in the capital than elsewhere. This is however, not a unique phenomenon. Huge differences in standard between tourists and locals are common in developing countries, where tourists are sheltered from the reality of the inhabitants. Yet, in Cuba it is the differences between the socialist and capitalist world that represent the largest contrasts. On the one hand there are hotel resorts, consumerism and luxury items, while on the other hand there are sign posts with revolutionary slogans, standardised wages and ration cards. This dual world is the reality for Cubans, and demonstrates the inconsistency between the two ideologies.

This description may give the impression that Cuban society is hopelessly static, with no possibility for individual Cubans to improve their conditions. This impression is wrong. As shown earlier, some of my informants have managed to climb the social ladder as a result of tourism. Twenty years ago, most Cubans did not have this opportunity. As tourism increased, and CUC became more easily accessible, it also allowed some Cubans to work their way up. This is therefore a very recent change in Cuban society. Yet, it is an important one because it challenges the previously, well established socialist values of equality and selflessness. Using Wilson's metaphor of "crab antics" to describe lack of upward mobility among men in Caribbean societies, one could argue that if one of the crabs eventually manages to climb out of the bucket, the remaining crabs become aware that it is indeed possible to make it to the top. The same scenario applies when someone acquires CUC and is able to buy certain consumer products, which are unobtainable for others. It signals to the rest that this possibility is also available to them if they go about a certain way. Ultimately, what this implies is that in order to achieve a higher standard of living, they have to make decisions and choices which are bound to undermine the socialist ideas.

Whereas the dualism of respectability and reputation is not the same as the one between

socialism and tourism, they do share certain characteristics. The respectability-reputation dualism shows two related and conflicting sets of cultural practices. This also describes the situation many Cubans are facing today. There is a constant contradiction between what Cubans feel morally bounded by, in terms of socialistic values, and their desire to enhance their economic situation through capitalist measures. Just like the moral system of respectability, socialism maintains the Cuban a socialist order, and the social system and values established by the revolution.

Juan is an example of a man who is concerned with being respectable in accordance to what the socialist society expects of him. He wants to live up to the ideal of a good revolutionary, and makes his decisions in accordance to the values he personally places highest. He has a state-paid job, and has resisted the temptation of engaging himself into activities within the grey zone of *jineterismo*. On the other hand there is Vanessa, who I will argue is an example of someone who strives to maintain her reputation. Besides being able to experience the tourist life style, money is the main motivator behind her choice of being a *jinetera*. Vanessa wants to be able to buy clothes and make-up, go to the cinema and go clubbing with her friends. She wants to be able to spend money and consume products, which otherwise would have been outside the price range of what she could afford. It is about status symbols, and showing to others that she is capable of buying these things. This form of conspicuous consumption is the major aspect that likens tourism to reputation.

These two examples show how my informants place more significance to one of the two moral systems. Without drawing any conclusions simply based on these examples, it is still interesting to look at the gender aspect. In contrast to Wilson's claim, my observations show that it is Juan who was more concerned with respectability, and Vanessa was concerned with reputation. My informants' stories do however support Boucher's argument that everyone experiences the dilemma of finding a balance between being respectable and maintaining their reputation.

When the Cuban government decided to introduce capitalist measures into the socialist society, it was done with the intention to revive the economy, and at the same time save the revolution. In a time with severe material shortage of basic supplies, it is however, not easy to put the greater good of the society ahead of individual needs (Blum 2011). Despite Cubans'

effort to work hard, they often find themselves resorting to illegal activities in order to meet basic needs and provide for their families. The hardship during the 1990s created a growing cynicism, which eventually led to the distortion of socialist values (Cramer 2009). Even though people may not completely agree with the socialist ideals of Cuba's contemporary politics, there is an underlying pride of being Cuban. For many Cubans this pride is associated with the idea of being a good revolutionary, and this is more emphasised than the fact that their activities at times contradict socialist ideals. Despite their engagement in illegal activities, Cubans generally pride themselves to be generous, decent, hard-working, conscientious, and to have strong family loyalty. Weinreb (2009) concludes that there is a "dissonance between their personal values and the strategies they employed to earn extra money" (2009: 32). In order to cope materially they have to exclude their own personal values from their moral universe. Although people want to purchase consumer items and have more discretionary income to spend in ways they find fit best, this does not mean that they all want to get rid of the socialist foundation on which their society is built. Tourism is however, the foundation for the current Cuban economy, and there are no indicators that this will change any time soon. If tourism continues to flourish, the government will have to find new ways for the values of consumerism and the socialist ideals to co-exist (Taylor & McGlynn 2009). According to Blum (2011), this process is not yet accomplished, and Cubans will have to live with a double version of society for some time to come.

The youth in Cuba today did not experience the years before the revolution, and are too young to recall the time before the 'Special Period', when the country enjoyed full employment and better social services. Since they have barely experienced anything but adversity, the youth is more likely to have a negative view of the socialist ideas (Cramer 2009). Supporters of the revolution often remind the younger generations that the gap between the privileged and the majority of Cubans used to be much greater prior to 1959 (Ibid.). As mentioned in the previous chapter, Juan seemed to be influenced by his grandfather's strong opinions about the revolution and the current situation in Cuba. Even though he has never experienced what it was like to live in Cuba prior to the revolution, or even prior to the mid-80s, he seemed to share his grandfather's views. Nevertheless, the next generations will have even less direct knowledge of the revolution, and it may be a challenge for the government to promote these values among the youth.

The commodification of Che's image has diminished his significance, and although he still represents a model for the 'New Man', there is a disconnection between reality and ideology (Blum 2011). Whereas Che Guevara, Camilo Cienfuegos, and the Castro brothers will remain important historical figures, the ideas about the 'New Man' is no longer as significant as it used to be. The ideas explain a lot about which values Che Guevara wanted the Cuban society to be built upon. Cuba has however, been through a number of huge changes, both socially and economically, which means that the country has different presumptions for these ideas to be adopted as guidelines. When Che Guevara first presented his ideas about the 'New Man', he emphasised that this person would never be complete, but constantly evolving. As the society evolved, so would the notion of the 'New Man' (Guevara 2005). In her study about Cuban youth and revolutionary values, Blum (2011) introduced the term *el Hombre Novisimo* (the newer man). This 'newer man' has many of the same characteristics as the 'New Man', but is "less aligned with a political party and more inspired by the philosophy of Jose Marti" (Blum 2011: 181). The 'newer man' also has a much stronger sense of national patriotism and unity in the struggles against imperialism all over Latin America. In many ways this person is a mix of the past and the future, and represents the emergence of new understandings of socialism (Blum 2011).

Juan was someone who had much respect for the socialist ideals, and who was striving to live by the examples of the 'New Man'. Despite the opportunities available to him, where he could have earned more money and gained more material wealth, he gave greater importance to idealism. For the rest of my informants, they were trying to balance their own personal desires with the expectations from the community. Their moral dilemmas are indicators which suggest that the 'New Man' ideal is no longer the dominate principle among young Cubans. As Blum (2011) pointed out, the newer man might be a better term when describing the traits of the Cuban youth today. Juana is perhaps the one who is closest to fill the role of the 'newer man'. Her patriotism for Cuba shows how she believes it is possible to achieve her dreams and build a future in her own country, without being a member or a supporter of the political party. Dennis is another example. He loves his job as a music teacher, and wants to continue living in Cuba. Achieving his dream of buying his own house is however, only possible by turning to tourism in order to supplement his income. Whereas his method of earning money might be considered anti-revolutionary, Dennis is proud to be Cuban. He realises, just like Vanessa claimed, that if Cubans are to support their government, they must

be happy with their situation and what the government can offer. If they are allowed some freedom to gain what they consider necessary in order to improve their life situation, Cubans may combine their personal desires with the socialist moral values, thus taking a step in the direction of a new understanding of socialism.

Concluding remarks

The tourist boom in the 1990s was a result of the government's strategy to revive its economy after the fall of the Soviet Union. The country was in desperate need of hard currency, and welcomed tourists with open arms. The economy experienced a boost, and tourism quickly surpassed the sugar industry as Cuba's main source of foreign currency. As a result of the shift in the economy, Cubans also started to experience the effects of the increasing contact with tourists. Among these effects, were the strengthened role of the CUC, a thriving black market, a shift in occupations, and more frequent occurrence of *jineterismo*.

I have used two theories in this thesis, the theory of relative deprivation, and Wilson's theory of respectability and reputation as contradicting moral systems. I have used the first theory to demonstrate how increased contact with tourists has fostered feelings of deprivation.

Although the overall living conditions in Cuba have not changed much, Cubans feel deprived due to the increased range of comparison. Cubans compare themselves with two reference groups, both foreign tourists, and other Cubans, as the latter now enjoy a higher standard of living, as a result of better access to CUC. I have concluded that comparisons made with other Cubans are most likely to foster the strongest perception of relative deprivation. This is because, unlike tourists, privileged Cubans are people whom the 'deprived' Cubans identify strongly and closely with. They are their relatives, neighbours, colleagues, compatriots etc. I have also argued that relative deprivation among Cubans have induced a desire to enhance their living situations. Access to CUC has therefore become prominent in order to purchase certain consumer products, which previously have been unobtainable.

With the CUC assuming an increasingly prominent role in the Cubans' daily lives, there has been a striking flight from traditional jobs to low-skilled jobs within the tourist industry. Cuba was known for its highly educated workforce, but this advantage is rapidly decreasing as Cubans see that education no longer pays. In order to reverse the current trend of 'domestic brain-drain', the state has to take measures to make the traditional professions more appealing to the youth.

The revolution and the socialist policies led to the creation of a new culture, and a new way

of thinking about the individual and its role in the Cuban society. While this culture has been dominating throughout the last part of the twentieth century, the substantial economic changes since the 1990s have challenged the revolutionary values. The thesis has therefore looked at how the government decided to use tourism as a means to stabilise the economy, and how the growth through tourism is inconsistent with the ideas of socialism. Tourism is seen as an obstacle to the aim of reducing income inequality. It encourages consumption, and its main objective is to increase the amount per capita each tourist spends. Although tourism may have led to a raise in the national income, it has also had some unfortunate effects within the society. Many of these effects are considered negative by the political authorities, because they are in contradiction to the socialist ideology. Increased social inequalities, the emergence of a social class system, and a growing consumer culture are viewed as characteristics of an emerging capitalist society. While tourism was considered necessary in order to stimulate the economy, there has been scepticism to the consequences such capitalistic measures would have on the socialist ideals. For instance, the activities Cubans involve themselves in to improve their social status often cross into the area of *jineterismo*. This is considered demoralising in accordance to the notion of the 'New Man', and many worry that this is the beginning of the end of socialism in Cuba.

Many young Cubans find themselves in the situation where they try to navigate their way through the moral dilemmas they face on a daily basis. I have argued that the dichotomy between tourism and socialism has certain similarities with the dichotomy between respectability and reputation as formulated by Wilson in *Crab Antics*. Living in a dual world, made up of two conflicting sets of values, Cubans constantly feel the dispute between their sense of responsibility to their community and their personal desires.

Cuba has entered an ambiguous period of its history, with a lot of uncertainty surrounding its future. Many scholars have attempted to predict the durability of the current regime. Some have also reflected on what form the transition will take, what type of regime will follow, and how this will affect the current situation, in regards to tourism, privatisation and ideology. After the fall of the Soviet Union, many observers predicted that Cuba would follow Eastern Europe and adopt a more market-oriented economic system, and possibly Western style democracy (Gonzalez & McCarthy 2004; Hawkins 2001; Langenbacher & Mujal-Leon 2009; Lopez 2002). Change will indisputably occur, however it is difficult, if not impossible, to

predict its timing and scope. It is possible that such changes will differ from any of the patterns or paths of Eastern Europe, China and other socialist states. Cuba has without doubt obtained an important position globally, and future international events and crisis will most definitely have its effects on Cuba, both politically and economically.

With so many external factors playing in, it is challenging to predict the outcomes of the current policies and regulations implemented by the government. I have therefore made sure this research does not focus too much on making predictions for the future. Such predictions often turn out to be wrong; anyway they are beyond the scope of my analysis. I will end by pointing out some topics which deserve urgent research as they may impact on the long-term social developments in Cuba. I briefly mentioned that the jobs available within the tourism industry are unevenly divided among black and white Cubans. It would be interesting to examine the effects tourism have on the different ethnic groups in Cuba. Also of great importance is studying identity changes in the wake of the merging of capitalism and socialism. Whereas most of the present Cuban population are born and raised under conditions we could describe as the celebration of the revolution, the recent reforms indicate the possibility of a transition away from socialism. It would therefore be interesting to disclose how the younger generations relate to the socialist values, and how this affects their sense of identity.

The current transition which Cuba is undergoing started more than two decades ago. What remains uncertain at this point is to what extent the government will allow capitalism to pervade through the Cuban society. The reforms implemented during the ‘Special Period’ were intended as temporary measures in response to the national state of emergency. Yet, most of these reforms do to a greater or lesser extent remain in place today, and there have been few indicators that suggest change in the immediate future (Weinreb 2009). Tourism is likely to continue to be Cuba’s primary source of foreign capital. The country is therefore trying to find ways for tourism to become an accepted part of the government’s plan to save the revolution. Rather than setting tourism and socialism up against each other, and treat them as complete opposites, which are impossible to merge, new ways to make the two more mutually consistent are needed.

I started my thesis by telling the story about my first day in Cuba. Jorge, my taxi driver,

mentioned that he believed it was time for new heroes. He acknowledged that Che Guevara was an important figure during the years of the revolution, and that his ideas about the ‘New Man’ were noble and admirable. Nevertheless, their relevance today is no longer as strong as it used to be. As the society has undergone several changes, the economic and social challenges have also shifted. Cubans are now facing different obstacles, which require new methods and solutions. Just as Che Guevara stated when he introduced his ideas about the ‘New Man’: “His image is not yet completely finished – it never could be, since the process goes forward hand in hand with the development of new economic forms” (Guevara 2005: 66). The ‘New Man’ is indeed still alive. His relevance today has however, been disputed since the implementation of capitalistic measures. For the notion of the ‘New Man’ to survive, it seems that it is time for him to step aside, and make room for the even ‘newer man’; a man who is more adapted to his time and is able to merge the disparities between capitalism and socialism.

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