



# Paving the way for Philippine tourism via interagency collaboration on road networks<sup>☆</sup>



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## ABSTRACT

Promoting tourism and improving roads are generic objectives for developing countries. Despite their relationship—tourists often reach destinations via roads—both are seldom considered together while evaluating options in improving the accessibility of tourist destinations. Since government agencies for tourism and infrastructure are usually separate, coordination difficulties arise. This article analyzes how the Philippines is attempting to surmount obstacles to beneficial collaboration linking tourism with road infrastructure by addressing rent-seeking, bureaucratic turf, and incentives to better align the activities of government agencies with tourism-led development. It enhances the literature by focusing on these governance challenges impeding the joint consideration of transport and tourism in developing countries. Additionally, it highlights the catalytic role played by a civil society organization. After providing a case to illustrate this collaboration in practice, the authors consider how the framework developed may be extended by the Philippine tourism ministry in working with other agencies overseeing complementary objectives to ensure seamless intermodal transport in this archipelagic nation.

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## 1. Introduction

Apart from having limited economic resources by definition, developing countries often compound their difficulties by lacking the institutional framework necessary to achieve desired policy objectives. Philippine tourism is a case in point: although tourism has often been touted as a way to help alleviate widespread poverty by broadening the reach of tourism revenues across the nation's breadth, deficient infrastructure hampers access to sites of potential interest. Deficient infrastructure highlights the challenges in institutionalizing governance mechanisms that not only identify noteworthy destinations but also facilitate the means of visiting them.

Philippine geography is, in this sense, both a benefit and a curse. Although the Philippines ranks 73rd worldwide in land area, it has the world's fifth-longest coastline owing to its archipelagic configuration (CIA, 2014). As such, it boasts globally renowned beach, dive and surfing destinations like Boracay Island, Tubbatha Reef and Siargao Island. Other attractions are scattered throughout

the archipelago of interest to nature tourists such as Bohol's Chocolate Hills and to cultural tourists given the country's Spanish colonial heritage and its kaleidoscope of vibrant indigenous communities. However, this geographic spread of tourist attractions also taxes the nation's capacity to provide vital transport access by air, land and sea despite specific measures promoting domestic aviation industry liberalization and roll-on/roll-off (RO-RO) ferry use.

This article discusses a governance mechanism designed to boost Philippine tourism in addressing one of its most serious impediments—poor road infrastructure—by paying attention to governance challenges. Tourism is a stern test for a nation's institutional capacity since it cuts across government agencies such as public works and tourism ministries; requires different skill sets such as financial planning, marketing and public administration; and involves many stakeholders groups such as local and national governments, tourism-related private enterprises and vulnerable communities such as indigenous groups and minorities. All the while, the Philippines' geography complicates efforts to align disparate interests while promoting tourism.

The authors evaluate a recently-implemented Tourism Road Infrastructure Project Prioritization Criteria (TRIPPC) as a tool for integrating policy on roads for tourism. It exemplifies a form of process innovation that addresses impediments to promoting tourism, with an emphasis on collaboration not only between government agencies but also with civil society actors. To this end, section two reviews relevant literature on transport and tourism,

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governance issues in infrastructure development exemplified by bureaucratic turf, and public sector innovation. Section three continues by contextualizing these literature streams in today's Philippine situation: reforms it has implemented since 2010 to address recurrent governance concerns as well as government initiatives to promote tourism. Section four then discusses the genesis and operationalization of interagency collaboration between the Philippines' public works and tourism ministries as encouraged by the REID (Research, Education and Institutional Development) Foundation, a civil society actor whose advocacy is improving infrastructure. Section five then uses a collaborative innovation model developed by [Sørensen and Torfing \(2011\)](#) to tie wider governance challenges on one hand with integrating tourism transport policies on the other. To illustrate TRIPPC in practice, the process of linking attractions in Bohol province by road is detailed. Lastly, prospects for using collaboration on roads as a starting point for other Philippine transport and tourism-related initiatives is evaluated.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Transport and tourism

Although the literature on transport and tourism [henceforth TR&TO] is sparse given transport's crucial role in facilitating tourist mobility, a number of researchers have enhanced this field of study. From a broader perspective, [Prideaux \(2000\)](#) highlighted the importance of transport in destination development, while emphasizing transport infrastructure being a precondition for the development of a tourism industry. In their edited volume, [Lumsdon and Page \(2004\)](#) deliver on Prideaux's suggestion for an expanded research agenda on the transport-tourism nexus by considering broader phenomena like equity and sustainability concerns for various modes of transportation. Similarly, a special issue of the *Journal of Transport Geography* was dedicated to tourism mobility in which, for instance, a 'travel chain' approach ([Schiefelbusch et al., 2007](#)) considered tourism from ecological, economic and social lenses. These considerations all figure into criteria discussed in this article.

Further, two sub-areas this article is concerned with—roads for tourism and infrastructure for tourism in developing countries—have also been explored. On tourism roads, studies have considered itinerary planning by car-based travelers ([Connell and Page, 2008](#)), the social representation of transport problems among motorists ([Dickinson and Robbins, 2008](#)), the value of scenic roads to these travelers ([Denstadli and Jacobsen, 2011](#)), and land–sea intermodal links for travelers via RO–RO ferries ([Basilio, 2008](#)). On the benefits of infrastructure for developing country tourism, [Khadaroo and Seetanah \(2007, 2008\)](#) use econometric methods to demonstrate how infrastructure development positively impacts tourist volume in Mauritius. Further, in his TR&TO reference work, [Page \(2009\)](#) delves into cases describing developing countries' particular challenges.

This article seeks to augment this literature by focusing on political-economic considerations in developing countries while planning infrastructure for tourism. Extant research on tourism roads has focused on motorists' concerns. However, it is comparatively rare for Philippine motorists to use privately-owned cars to travel widely for a host of reasons. Its archipelagic configuration—the Philippines ranks second after Indonesia in its number of islands at 7107 ([CIA, 2014](#))—precludes easy car-based travel nationwide. Vehicle ownership is also limited; [World Bank \(2014\)](#) data indicates the Philippines has 30 motor vehicles per 1000 persons compared to, for instance, Mauritius (175) and the United Kingdom (519) which feature in research cited earlier. Moreover,

car rentals are rare even at Philippine international airports. Instead, tourism roads are envisioned more in terms of providing convenient access. [Prideaux \(2002, p. 1\)](#) avers that the volume of tourist flows is affected by the technology of travel and the degree of hardship endured during travel to an attraction. Therefore, roads that are circuitous or are in poor condition may detract from the overall tourist experience to the detriment of tourist flows. The following sections will focus on Philippine governance issues that have previously hindered accessibility of such tourist attractions.

### 2.2. Infrastructure and governance

Given the often-substantial sums involved—transport infrastructure accounts for between 10% and 20% of national budgets—projects in developing countries are often plagued by rent-seeking ([Paterson and Chaudhuri, 2007, p. 159](#)). [Collier and Hoeffler \(2005\)](#) state that infrastructure is a sector prone to irregularities since it is an 'idiosyncratic' form of capital that is difficult to standardize and benchmark across disparate locations and a 'network' activity with several points of government involvement. Corruption risks exist at all stages of a project cycle: planning, budgeting, funding, bidding and income generation. Cross-country comparisons routinely find construction and public works to be among the most corrupt sectors ([World Bank, 2011](#)).

An importance source for rent-seeking emanates from a lack of coordination among government agencies or the formation of 'bureaucratic turf' ([Downs, 1967](#)) in the belief that maximizing one's budgetary allocation and minimizing interactions with other agencies create the greatest benefits for an agency's personnel. Consequently, [Paterson and Chaudhuri \(2007\)](#) argue there is a tight connection in the transport sector among poor governance, process weaknesses and abuses, state capture, and project-specific administrative corruption.

### 2.3. Public innovation

The [European Commission \(2013, p.9\)](#) defines public sector innovation as a new or significantly improved service, communication method, process, or organizational method. These four encompass novel or enhanced ways of providing services or interacting with users; of promoting government services or influencing behavior; of supporting governance-related activities; and of organizing work responsibilities and decision-making. Meanwhile, a literature encouraging public innovation in these areas has emerged in developed countries (cf. [ANAO, 2009](#); [West and Lu, 2009](#)). Especially given its potential to address governance concerns, public innovation has also been advocated for developing countries ([Serrat, 2012](#)). The Philippines, for instance, promotes e-government ([UA&P, 2014](#)) and similar measures designed to reduce opportunities for corruption by increasing procedural transparency while transacting with government agencies. This article places emphasis on process innovation in encouraging interagency collaboration.

## 3. Philippine situation

Underperformance on tourism promotion and endemic corruption are not separate phenomena. This section discusses how nascent political reforms relate to efforts to improve Philippine tourism insofar as governance challenges negatively impact promotion of this vital industry—especially due to infrastructural limitations.

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