NETWORK GOVERNANCE TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM:
OPTIONS FOR THE LOWER ANGAT RIVER BASIN,
BULACAN PROVINCE, PHILIPPINES

by

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B.E.S., The University of Waterloo, 2011

A PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS (PLANNING)

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

School of Community and Regional Planning

We accept this project as conforming
to the required standard

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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
November 2013
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ABSTRACT

Tourism is regarded as one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world, with visitor arrivals exceeding the one billion mark for the first time in 2012. The impacts of rapid tourism development, particularly in the developing world, are well documented. Since the 1970s, studies began to critically study the negative costs of tourism on the socio-cultural and biophysical environments on which it depends. These criticisms have led to the integration of sustainability approaches in tourism planning and development. In the past decade, there has been growing interest in the study of governance as a key component of sustainable tourism development. This professional project explores the potential implications of collaborative network governance to tourism development in the case study province of Bulacan in Central Luzon, Philippines.

Among the tourism research that has emerged in recent decades, collaborative network governance is seen as a means to ameliorate the fragmented nature of tourism development and provide a structure for problem solving through the understanding of common goals and interests towards sustainable tourism. This preliminary study of Bulacan Province is based on a review of network governance typologies and collaborative governance as defined by Ansell and Gash (2008). At the time of research, the findings uncovered various factors that were not discussed as variables in network governance literature. First, the strong influence of politics in the Philippine context affected the existing tourism network, the Provincial Tourism Council (PTC), to be put on hold. Second, the decentralization and devolution process still poses immense pressures and challenges to the Local Government Units (LGUs) in Bulacan Province.

This research recognizes the complexity of these factors on tourism governance and provides practical near-term and long-term recommendations. The results indicate that the collaborative network governance model is not realistic for Bulacan Province to pursue, and instead should consider formulating cooperative and coordinative modes of governance on an informal basis. Additionally, the Provincial Cultural and Tourism Office (PCTO), regarded as a leader among tourism stakeholders, should continue their leadership position to engage stakeholders by prioritizing attainable goals and objectives. Lastly, the need for tourism planning highlights the gaps in tourism development in the Philippines. Bulacan Province’s future tourism potential in cultural-heritage tourism and nature-based tourism depends on the coordinated efforts and resource-sharing actions if effective governance is to lead to a sustainable path.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACRONYM</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BARO</td>
<td>Bulacan Association of Resort Owners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BATA</td>
<td>Bulacan Association of Travel Agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BENRO</td>
<td>Bulacan Environment and Natural Resource Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSU</td>
<td>Bulacan State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>CL-RDP</td>
<td>Central Luzon Regional Development Plan</td>
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<td>CL-RPFP</td>
<td>Central Luzon Regional Physical Framework Plan</td>
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<td>CL-TAP</td>
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<td>DILG</td>
<td>Department of the Interior and Local Government</td>
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<td>LGU</td>
<td>Local Government Unit</td>
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<td>Medium Term Philippines Development Plan</td>
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<td>NEDA</td>
<td>National Economic Development Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCTO</td>
<td>Provincial Cultural and Tourism Office</td>
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<td>PHACTO</td>
<td>Provincial History, Arts, Cultural and Tourism Office</td>
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<td>PPDO</td>
<td>Provincial Planning and Development Office</td>
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<td>PTC</td>
<td>Provincial Tourism Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWOT</td>
<td>Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIEZA</td>
<td>Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNWTO / WTO</td>
<td>United Nations World Tourism Organization</td>
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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Numerous people have been instrumental during the process of completing this project. I would first like to thank my supervisor Nora Angeles for her continuous guidance, encouragement, and support throughout the research and writing process. Her generosity to her students and her community in the Philippines is deserving of praise and admiration. I would also like to thank my second reader, Dr. Francisco Magno, for your last minute assistance with the review of this project.

Thank you to all the individuals who kindly assisted me in the Philippine: Gilbert Angeles, Dr. Victoria Valenzuela, Dr. Arsenio Pasqua, and all the research informants who took the time to answer my questions. This research also would not have been possible without the help Ms. Jenny Mae Cruz at the PCTO, who generously accompanied two foreigners on the hot jeepney rides to various municipal offices.

Finally, a special thank you to Raymond for all your loving support and guidance. Thank you for believing in me every step of the way.
SECTION ONE
INTRODUCTION: PROJECT CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

1.1 Overview

Tourism is the largest industry in the world. Visitor arrivals exceeded the 1 billion mark for the first time in 2012, with 1,035 million tourists crossing borders (UNWTO, 2012). With tourism forecasts growing globally and the promise of economic generation, both developed and developing countries are creating policies to generate benefits from the tourism industry. In the case of the Philippines, the desire to develop tourism is a national priority, with the national government spearheading marketing campaigns and developing new tourism zones. Undoubtedly, there is still untapped tourism potential in the Philippines; the Philippine Department of Tourism has ambitiously set a target of 10 million international visitors by 2016 through more aggressive marketing (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2013a).

The impacts of rapid tourism development, particularly in developing countries, are well documented. Since the 1970s, studies began to look more critically at the negative consequences of tourism development as an unplanned activity, unearthing the self-destructive and unsustainable forms of development occurring at the cost of the socio-cultural and biophysical environments on which it depends (Gunn, 1994; Hall, 2000; Mathieson and Wall, 1982; Pearce, 1989). These criticisms have led to tourism development practices which consider more comprehensive planning approaches, such as sustainable development, system approaches, integrated planning, community-based tourism, and others (Tosun and Jenkins, 1998).

The tourism research that has emerged in recent decades sees the collaborative approach as a means to ameliorate the fragmented nature of tourism development. Drawing from collaboration theory, the processes associated with collaborative planning, community planning, and collaborative governance are ways which attempt to promote problem solving through understanding common goals and interests.

While collaborative approaches have been used and studied quite extensively in developed countries (e.g. Bramwell and Lane, 2000, 2011; Dredge, 2006; Hall 1999, 2000; Jamal and Getz, 1995), the use of collaboration and partnerships in tourism planning is gaining momentum in developing countries (e.g.
de Araujo and Bramwell, 2002; Erkuş-Öztürk and Eraydin, 2010; Ladkin, 2002; Reed, 2000; Roberts and Simpson, 1999; Robertson, 2011; Timothy, 1998). Given that many developing countries have a lot to gain and much to lose in tourism development, research into collaborative planning practices is an important step forward.

To this effect, this research attempts to explore the possibilities of collaborative planning and governance approaches in the tourism industry of Bulacan Province in the Philippines. Further, this report will propose practical actions to establish and incorporate sustainability principles into tourism planning.

1.2 Context and Scope

This research took place in Bulacan Province, located north of Metro Manila in the Central Luzon region of the Philippines. The Philippines is the world’s second largest archipelago with over 7,100 islands with a total land area of 300,000 km$^2$ (Figure 1). Current population estimates for 2013 exceed 100 million inhabitants, with more than half of the population residing in regions of Luzon (CIA, 2013). There has been tremendous growth in the service sector over the years, employing 54% of the labour force. Agricultural (30%) and industrial (15.5%) sectors are other major sectors (National Statistics Office, 2013). The economy is also reliant upon remittances, estimated at $30 billion in 2012 alone, from Filipino nationals working abroad. In 2012, the GDP per capita was $4,500 US (CIA, 2013), and an estimated 44% of the population live on less than $2 US a day. The causes of poverty has been attributed to “weak macroeconomic management, employment issues, high population growth rates, an underperforming agricultural sector and an unfinished land reform agenda, governance issues including corruption and a weak state, conflict and security issues particularly in Mindanao, and disability” (ADB, 2005, p. xvii).

The service sector, with its continuous growth, is expected to make a greater contribution to the economy in the future, with a particular role for tourism as well. The Philippines experienced relatively fast paced growth in both inbound international tourism and domestic tourism in the latter half of the 2000s. In 2012, tourism accounted for about 7 percent of the total economy and is expected to grow to 11 percent by 2016 (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2013b). There were 3.52 million international visitors and 16.9 million domestic travellers at the end of 2010 (DOT, 2011). However, domestic tourism figures may
lack certain accuracy as numbers are based on surveys and estimates from participating accredited tourism establishments (Rufino, 2011). Thus, it is believed that domestic tourism numbers are actually greater than what is reported (Maguigad, 2013).

Although the data points to the steady growth in tourism and its economic contributions, the use of tourism as a panacea for economic development and social change comes with consequences without the consideration of long term internal and external factors (Tosun and Jenkins, 1996). While “newer” forms of tourism approaches, such as community-based development and ecotourism are extensively marketed in various Philippine destinations, research on these case studies have been limited to the more popular destinations like Boracay Island (e.g., Trousdale, 1999). Additionally, tourism development has traditionally favoured destinations with “sun, sand, and sea” attributes. Bulacan Province, although conveniently located immediately north of Metro Manila, has a diverse range of natural and cultural heritage assets which has not yet seen gains in the tourism sector in recent years. A multitude of factors, ranging from policy gaps, lack of political will, and market demand are possible explanations.

Identifying the governance options Bulacan can take as a local government could provide this province with actions they could consider in tourism planning. The scope of this research is limited to understanding the mechanisms of coordination currently existing in Bulacan Province and what adjustments could be made to improve the network governance of tourism policy and planning. While the main focus of this research is on governance, considered to be the weakest link in land use planning and tourism planning in the Philippines (Maguigad, 2013), the scope of this project will also briefly touch on political and public administration themes. Section Three will detail the research findings in Bulacan followed by discussions on the thematic findings in tourism governance.

Partners at Bulacan Province have also requested the author to provide broad recommendations on how the Province and municipalities can work together to improve Bulacan tourism products. Recommendations will be provided for the main tourism stakeholders in Bulacan Province, such as member municipalities in the Province with an interest in tourism planning and development, Bulacan State University, and private sector tourism associations. Detailed descriptions of the research methods are provided in Section 1.4 of this report.
Figure 1: Map of the Philippines and Location of Bulacan Province

Source: Adapted from CIA World Factbook (2013)
1.3 Problem Statement, Project Objectives, and Research Questions

This sub-section explains the project’s research problem, its key objectives and the primary and secondary questions it aims to address.

1.3.1 Problem Statement

There is potential for further tourism development in Bulacan Province. The challenge of advancing tourism in Bulacan in a sustainable manner is the main challenge. Currently, the province’s greatest tourism strength lies in cultural tourism, with several festivals and historical sites throughout Bulacan. The northwestern parts of Bulacan, with its natural biophysical assets, such as the historic Biak-na-Bato National Park have been recently considered for ecotourism development. However, tourism planning in the province is a fragmented process and is susceptible to the gains or detriments of political interests. The development of tourism facilities also occur on an ad hoc basis, without any short, medium, or long term guiding plans. With economic development as a main priority for Bulacan Province and municipalities, the structure and mechanisms for coordinated and hopefully collaborative tourism planning is needed should the Province move forward in their desire for enhanced tourism development.

1.3.2 Project Objectives

Working as part of the Collaborative Governance of Urbanizing Watersheds: Integrated Research, Institution-and Capacity-Building for Sustainability and Climate Risk Adaptation in Angat River Basin, Philippines project, funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, this project explores the concept of collaborative governance towards sustainable tourism development in Bulacan Province. This project aims to meet the following objectives:

- To examine the potential for collaborative governance in sustainable tourism development,
- To assess options of collaboration that will assist Bulacan Local Government Units (LGUs) and tourism stakeholders to strategically plan for sustainable tourism,
- To explore the relationship and interaction between public and private stakeholders in order to identify strengths, opportunities, and challenges they may face in collaboration, and,
- To provide recommendations for improvements to tourism planning in Bulacan Province.
1.3.3 Research Questions

This project seeks to answer the primary research question, *how can collaborative governance work as a means towards sustainable tourism planning and development in Bulacan Province?* Furthermore, the following sub-questions will also be explored:

1. To what extent does collaboration exist between the major stakeholders of the tourism sector in Bulacan Province?
2. Under what conditions can collaborative/network governance in tourism exist in Bulacan Province?
3. How can current collaboration be made more effective? (i.e. what are the primary challenges and how they be addressed?)
4. What governance options are best suited for sustainable tourism planning and development in Bulacan Province?

This work contributes to the study of collaboration and sustainability in tourism planning. The transition towards more sustainable practices in tourism is still in its early stages in the Philippines. These objectives and research questions were addressed firstly through an extensive review of secondary literature on collaborative governance, network governance, and collaborative planning. This literature was then used to explore options of collaboration in the administrative context of LGUs in Bulacan Province.

1.4 Research Methods

1.4.1 Overview

This research takes place in Bulacan Province, in the Philippines. With twenty-one municipalities and three component cities, a bulk of the research was completed with assistance from the provincial tourism office. This research does not represent the whole of Bulacan Province, as the bulk of the interviewees represent lower Angat basin municipalities. Due to the qualitative nature of this research, the recommendations will be for the consideration mainly of the province and municipalities.
1.4.2 Data Collection Procedures

The scope of this research is exploratory in nature, using two primary data and information collection methods. First, a literature review was conducted to provide direction to the study. Literature used was primarily from academic literature, internal government documents, and local news articles. Due to the immense amount of literature on the concepts of tourism governance, collaborative governance, and sustainable tourism development, only the literature directly studying network governance and collaborative planning within the tourism context were used.

Second, qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews in April and May of 2013 with key informants from the Bulacan tourism public and private sectors. Most of the municipal tourism officers interviewed represent the lower Angat municipalities. Informal interviews were also carried out with individuals who provided broad, contextual information. Questions were asked to first understand their views on the current state of tourism in Bulacan Province and what their respective roles were. Further probing questions regarding their coordinative actions and relationships with the other public and private agencies were asked. Ten face-to-face interviews took place at the respondents’ place of work and lasted between 30 minutes and one hour. This primary data will be analyzed for commonalities and stakeholder views rather than focus on individual differences.

The sample of respondents was chosen in two ways: first, given the scope of the broader project (i.e., Collaborative Governance of Urbanizing Watersheds: Integrated Research, Institution-and Capacity-Building for Sustainability and Climate Risk Adaptation in Angat River Basin, Philippines), the municipalities bordering the Angat River were prioritized, especially as certain municipalities are in the process of developing eco-parks by the public waterways. Second, civil servants and representative members of the private stakeholders were prioritized. These contacts were made through the Bulacan Provincial Planning Department Office and the Provincial Cultural and Tourism Office. As the timing of the field research was during the municipal and provincial election period, the researcher was unable to obtain interviews with any politicians. Although the sample size is small and not without limitations or potential bias, it is appropriate for this initial exploratory study.

One of the challenges faced in the field research is the willingness of participants to engage in a lengthy interview, especially as many respondents were unsure of their English capabilities. Although English is
widely spoken in the Philippines, the researcher came across difficulties in conveying certain questions to a small number of respondents, despite the attempts of rephrasing. To this effect, this preliminary study offers a broad view of the state of collaborative tourism planning approaches in Bulacan Province, and acknowledges that further research may be required to explore the issues raised.

1.4.3 Anticipated Limitations of Proposed Research Approach

The proposed research approach is bound by the reality of time, resources, and extraneous factors beyond the researcher’s control. Limitations exist in the literature review as well as the primary field research in Bulacan. First, much of the literature to date on the governance of tourism planning and development are done in the developed world, with many case studies in Europe, North America, and Australia. While the literature review has provided the foundational principles and lessons-learned from theoretical and applied contexts, there remains a gap in research in the developing world. Thus, this research will attempt to bridge primary and available literature in the Filipino context to the secondary literature review on governance and sustainable tourism development.

Second, the field research proved difficult in many aspects. In addition to the aforementioned language barrier, the interviews conducted may have the potential to be missing information that may have been obtained through empirical survey methods and interviews with other relevant stakeholders in the Philippines. The interviews were based mostly on the “expert” opinions of the tourism officers, academics, and private tourism operators. Unfortunately, this Author was unable to interview the Governor or other politicians as the LGUs were going through election season in May 2013. Although the initial focus was on the public servants and private sector stakeholders, a political rationale would have been helpful with the overall outcome of this research.

Lastly, a major challenge for researchers and for public entities in the developing world is the availability of comprehensive and up-to-date data, which creates deficiencies in tourism research and planning. Therefore, the data that are widely used by planners and politicians tend to be easily measurable economic units, such as tourist arrivals, hotel occupancy rates, and sales revenue.
1.5 Organisation of Report

In pursuit of the report’s objectives and research questions, the paper is organized into five sections. The first section introduces the project context, intent, and research methodology. The second section examines relevant literature pertaining to sustainable tourism, tourism governance, and network and collaborative governance. The third section then presents the findings of this study, providing more in-depth context of Bulacan Province and tourism development in the Philippines. The fourth section will discuss the findings under the guidance of the literature review from Section Two. Finally, near-term and long-term recommendations for the Provincial Tourism Office and concluding statements will be made in section five.
SECTION TWO
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND COLLABORATIVE NETWORK GOVERNANCE IN TOURISM

2.1 Overview

Tourism is regarded as one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world. National and local governments, particularly in the developing world, have capitalized on the potential of tourism in promoting economic development. However, as global competition for markets and capital increases, the desire for economic development often overlooks necessary planning processes for short-term gain. There is widespread acceptance that tourism, as one of the world’s largest industries, must move towards sustainability through strategic and long term planning approaches. Despite the variability in definitions and empirical evidence of what sustainable tourism development ought to be, researchers seem to accept that sustainable development is inherently good and appropriate for tourism, and that its adoption will address the negative impacts of tourism development (Butler, 1999).

As tourist volumes worldwide continue to grow, many countries and organizations are led to consider mechanisms leading towards more sustainable practices, much of which advocate for institutional mechanisms to encourage the implementation of public policies and the inclusion of local communities and organizations (Brohman, 1996). The industry is seen as not only an economic generator, but also a contributor to ecological management and an important component of land use planning for many communities. As such, effective local governance has emerged as a central element of a “holistic” and “balanced” approach to sustainable tourism. Cross-sectoral partnerships and networks are also seen as a necessary and desirable strategy to address “wicked problems” (Agranoff and McGuire, 2003; Bryson et al, 2006; Koppenjan, 1997; Mandell, 2001).

The tourism industry encompasses a broad spectrum of activities that may benefit from sustainable development and collaborative planning practices. However, cross-sector collaboration is no panacea. The complexities involved in the institutional structure and collaboration processes among a diverse group of stakeholders can be challenging and arduous. In pursuant of the sustainability agenda (among other factors), collaboration is a necessary although not a sufficient ingredient. The purpose of this section is to critically explore the concepts of sustainable development and collaborative governance
and their application to the tourism field. More specifically, a framework highlighting governance options will be used to inform practical actions for the Bulacan Provincial Cultural and Tourism Office in Section Five.

2.2 Sustainable Development and Sustainable Tourism

2.2.1 Tourism and Sustainability

Sustainability is a primary concept integrated in tourism studies today with researchers and international entities looking for ways to promote and assess progress towards sustainable development. These studies have focused on social, human, and economic development aspects in tourism development while recognizing the importance of natural resources and the environment. These efforts have also recognized that the inter-connected systems related to development processes, such as government institutions and free-market mechanisms, can contribute to sustainable tourism development via cross-sectoral partnerships and networks that enhance the level of stakeholder participation in relevant decision-making processes (Robertson, 2011).

The integrative concept of sustainability has largely been attributed to the widely referenced Brundtland Report, which calls for “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 43). The Report also recognizes the need for greater social justice for environmental conservation and the biophysical limits to economic growth in industrialized and industrializing societies. Since then, sustainability is often portrayed as the ultimate outcome of necessary change to current practice of short-term benefits at the expense of environmental and social concerns.

Despite the widely cited Brundtland definition of sustainable development, there remains little consensus on the meaning of the term in literature and government institutions (Bramwell and Lane, 2011; Butler, 1999; McCool and Moisey, 2001). The vagueness in the term serves as a “guiding fiction”, stimulating social discourse around the problematic issues surrounding the term without specific definitions to guide action (Shumway, 1991). Additionally, the enormous volume of output generated over the subject is also said to have contributed to ambiguity in the various sustainability related
terminology and is perceived as an ideology and point of view rather than an exact operational definition (Beioley, 1995; Clarke, 1997; De Kadt, 1990; Pearce, 1992).

The World Tourism Organization (UNEP and WTO, 2001), a specialized agency of the United Nations, defines sustainable tourism as,

...development [that] meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems.

The Philippine Tourism Act of 2009, similarly defines sustainable tourism development as,

... the management of all resources that meet the needs of tourists and host regions while protecting the opportunities for the future, in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems.

Both definitions continue to pursue a balance where tourism serves as a positive economic development tool while improving quality of life of the host community, providing high quality visitor experiences, and maintaining environmental integrity. Additionally, UNWTO urges informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as a strong political leadership to facilitate the participatory and consensus-building process.

The notion of “balance” as suggested in both definitions has been criticized to continue to favour the pro-growth economic agenda in the current political-economic system, especially as difficult trade-offs must be made in the application of sustainability principles (Cater, 1995). It is recognized by the UN-WTO that,

Sustainable tourism approaches, policies and plans are not always consistently followed and applied by all nations, at all tourism destinations and by all actors in the tourism process. There are many factors that prevent a more systematic application of declared policies and the implementation of tourism development plans (WTO, 2002, p. 56).
While the sustainability debate continues, the reality of problems around poverty, and destruction of ecological and cultural heritage continue to exist. As such, sustainable development continues to play an important role in the tourism industry as tourism planners work within existing structures towards sustainability. Bramwell and Lane (1993) assert that sustainability can be used as a positive approach to reduce tensions and friction created by the complex interactions between the tourism industry, tourists, the environment and the host communities, and potentially lessen the pervasiveness of poverty and environmental impacts.

### 2.2.2 Clarifying the vagueness: “what is sustained in sustainable tourism?”

Sustainability, sustainable development, and sustainable tourism are all well-established terms used interchangeably in the literature. Although the semantics of these terms have been explored by Butler (1999b) and Harris and Leiper (1995), for the purpose of this research, sustainability is broadly considered state-focused, implying stable life conditions for generations to come. Sustainable development is more process-oriented, associated with managed changes that improve conditions for those involved in or affected by development. Sustainable tourism is defined as all types of tourism (conventional or alternative) that are compatible with or contribute to sustainable development.

Over the last few decades, research on sustainable tourism has been varied and dynamic. Clarke’s (1997) review noted shifts in the understanding of sustainable tourism. Clarke puts forward four positions of understanding. The first position places sustainable tourism and mass tourism as polar opposites, where sustainable tourism was stereotyped as “good” and mass tourism as the “bad”. The second position emerged in the 1990s, which suggested that a continuum existed between sustainable tourism and mass tourism. In this position, scale was the defining feature of sustainable tourism. This position was replaced by the third position of movement, which strived to make mass tourism more sustainable, and that sustainability was a goal to work towards. Lastly, the position of convergence as a way to operationalize current knowledge became the focus, applying sustainability to all tourism, regardless of scale. This position also recognizes that a precise definition of sustainable tourism is less important than the movement towards that direction.

McCool and Moisey (2001) similarly explored sustainable tourism approaches by asking the question of what is sustained in sustainable tourism development. The results broadly categorize sustainable tourism development in three types:
The first category aims to sustain tourism by maintaining tourism businesses over a long time frame. This carries a narrower view as the objective of sustainable tourism is the tourism (and recreation) industry and included business firms. The marketing aspect is emphasized in order to ensure a rise in the number of visitors. This view generally does not recognize tourism as a tool to enhance economic opportunity or to protect the community’s cultural and natural heritage, maintaining a desired quality of life (p. 4).

The second category views sustainable tourism as a kinder and gentler form of tourism that is generally small in scale and sensitive to cultural and environmental impacts. The involvement of local people in the decision making process is also emphasized. This type of sustainable tourism is seen in ecotourism and alternative tourism practices – generally small in scale, designed to benefit local communities, and resources are protected. However, there is still a considerable divergence of opinions on the notion of sustainable tourism and what it entails (p. 4).

In the third category, tourism is seen as a tool for social and economic development. Tourism is a method to enhance economic opportunity and not as an end objective. Instead, tourism is not necessarily sustained over a long period, but used as a method of accumulating income and government revenue to be used later for other development tools. Therefore, the integration of tourism into broader economic and social development programmes is a priority (Hunter, 1995). Notably, the type of tourism in this view may not necessarily be small in scale. Increasingly, authors are calling for planning processes to involve collaboration and negotiation, and to recognize that planning should be adaptive to the dynamics of tourism (p. 5).

The third category of sustainable tourism development is the preferred view in this research. However, it is not the intention of this project to prescribe what sustainable tourism ought to be for the municipalities of Bulacan Province, but to provide critical perspectives for the client’s consideration.

2.2.3 “Operationalizing” sustainable tourism

Sustainability is as important in tourism as any other sector, and equally difficult to achieve. Much of the literature on sustainable tourism has focused on the traditional dimensions (e.g. economic, social, cultural, and ecological dimensions) of tourism. HwanSuk and Sirakaya’s study on sustainable community tourism development based on input from a panel of 38 tourism research academics added
political and technological dimensions (2006). Similarly, Bramwell et al (1996) attempt to specify the sustainability in planning frameworks into seven dimensions: environmental, cultural, political, economic, social, managerial, and governmental. Pearce (1993) and Hall (1994) discuss the influence of the political system and power distribution on sustainable development objectives and outcomes. Moreover, the political issues around sustainable tourism are often associated with community and stakeholder collaboration, poor regulations, and the displacement of residents (HwanSuk and Sirakaya, 2006). HwanSuk and Sirakaya (2006) further add that political support in the form of legally binding commitments at the national and regional level is critical in obtaining information, funding, education, and expertise. As emphasized by Becker, Jahn and Stiess (1999), the main objective in the political context of sustainability is to guide future sustainable tourism goals and establish a system of governance that is able to implement sustainability policies at all levels.

Two main functions can thus operationalize sustainability in tourism: integrated planning, and collaborative forms of governance. Tourism’s complex development processes requires an integrated planning approach. In order to operationalize sustainability in tourism, academics advocate for holistic planning frameworks accounting for various dimensions of sustainable tourism. For instance, Inskeep (1991) suggests three broad sustainable tourism planning objectives. First, planning should be continuous, incremental and flexible. Second, it should be systems oriented and integrated within the tourist system itself as well as the local policies and plans. Third, local participation in the planning and decision making process to the extent of local management of the tourism resource is highlighted.

Sustainable tourism development is a process that is unique for each area, given that various stakeholders and interests are involved. Therefore, there is no standard procedure to structure the problem solving. As Tosun (2001) argues, contemporary approaches to tourism development (i.e. community involvement, integrative approaches) can be considered essential to work towards sustainable tourism development in the developing world. However, these planning approaches developed in and for developed countries require a great deal of effort, financial and technical resources which may not be available in developing countries. There is also a possibility that these contemporary approaches are palatable to politicians and decision-makers. Thus, Tosun (2001) suggests that developing countries develop their own unique tourism development approaches which consider socio-economic, political and legislative conditions.
2.3 Tourism Governance: The Shift towards Collaboration and Networks

This section explains the recent shift in study from the role of government to the role of governance in sustainable tourism policy and planning. The complex tourism industry stretches across a vast number of stakeholders. The emergence of network governance and collaborative processes facilitates the cross-sectoral decision-making process towards more sustainable policy outcomes.

2.3.1 Overview of Tourism Governance

The study of governance is a key concept in political science and public policy that is gaining ground in tourism policy and planning literature. The study of the role of government and government policy in tourism development gradually shifted to the more expansive notion of governance in the 1990s (Hall, 2011). From the growing number of literature development, tourism planning and policymaking is increasingly characterized by multi-actor interactions, complex power dynamics, and uneven resource and information exchange between actors and agencies (Bramwell, 2006; Dredge, 2006; Hall and Jenkins, 1995). This also includes a degree of accountability to those who are directly impacted by tourism development.

In effect, the study of tourism governance attempts to understand the relationship between policy actors, state capacity, policy instruments and indicators, and the role and effect of non-state participation (Bramwell, 2005; Hall, 2004; Holme, 2001). This shift toward tourism governance has not only promoted increased interest in networks and collaboration, but has also placed further emphasis on the role of joint action between public and private sectors (Dredge, 2006). To achieve economic, social, and human development goals, diverse stakeholders from the public, private, and non-profit sectors must overcome conflicting interests and work together to ensure everyone benefits from the tourism development process. Bramwell and Lane (2011) assert that “tailored and effective governance is a key requirement for implementing sustainable tourism: it can enhance democratic processes, provide direction and offer the means to make practical progress” (p. 411).

Governance is the act of governing, but there is no single accepted definition of the term (Kooiman, 2003). Definitions tend to describe governance as a systematic form of governing in a contemporary state and the ways that societies are governed, ruled, or “steered” (Bulkeley, 2005; Pierre and Peters, 2000). It also implies collective decision making and coordination between stakeholders with divergent
views and interests; it extends beyond formal, government actors – non-state actors and markets may be involved to increase coordination in network relationships and public-private partnerships (Newman and Clarke, 2009; Rhodes, 1997; Yee, 2004). Thus, the core concept of governance is the relationship between state intervention and societal autonomy or self-regulation (Baggio, Cooper, and Scott, 2010; Hall, 2011). In the tourism context, Baggio, Scott, and Cooper (2010, p.52) suggest that “the governance system may be considered as the tool by which the destination adapts to change”.

2.3.2 Governance Typologies

Hall (2011) systematically identified four main typologies of governance suitable for tourism: hierarchies, markets, networks and communities (Figure 2). These typologies are sorted by the hierarchical forms of regulation and the relative power balance in the relationship between state and non-state actors. First, hierarchical governance is often viewed as the “traditional” model of state governance. While this approach is influenced by changes in state environments, globalization, and the growth of political powers at the local state, hierarchical governance maintains an important function in matters of international relations and the like (Russell, Lafferty, and Loudon, 2008). Second, market governance is closely tied to the neoliberal political philosophy, where the state uses regulatory methods to allow the market, in this case tourism, to be self-regulated. However, evidence suggests that market governance in the form of self-regulation has been less than successful, particularly with regard to achieving sustainable forms of tourism (Gossling and Hall, 2008; Gossling, Hall, Peeters, and Scott, 2010). Third, network governance and the closely associated public-private partnerships, has gained momentum in tourism policy and planning in facilitating coordination and even collaboration among public and private stakeholders. Lastly, the approach of governance as communities is driven by direct citizen involvement, suggesting that large-scale governments be replaced by smaller community units. Community governance is recognized as a dominant theme in tourism planning now considered a part of sustainable tourism planning (Bramwell and Sharman, 1999).
Figure 2: Frameworks of governance typology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hierarchical</th>
<th>Public Actors</th>
<th>Private Actors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HIERARCHIES</td>
<td>MARKETS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nation state and supranational institutions</td>
<td>Marketization and privatization of state instruments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-hierarchical</td>
<td>NETWORKS</td>
<td>COMMUNITIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public-private partnerships</td>
<td>Private-private partnerships communities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Reproduced from Hall (2011, p. 443).

Given the fragmented nature of the tourism industry, it is becoming increasingly apparent to governments, tourism managers, planners, and academics that planning and governance practices need to incorporate cooperative and collaborative approaches. It is believed that inter-organizational collaboration may lead to the pooling of knowledge, expertise, capital and other resources, greater coordination of policies, and more effective implementation (Pretty, 1995). From this collaboration, destinations and organizations may gain competitive advantages (Huxham, 1996). In addition, some authors contend that the inclusion of a broad array of stakeholders is a moral obligation in the decision-making process (Innes and Booher, 2003; Tacconi and Tisdell, 1992).

Collaboration in the tourism field is often seen in the context of community-based tourism (Mitchell and Reid, 2001; Simmons, 1994; Tosun, 2000) or sustainable tourism (Bramwell and Lane, 1996, 1999; Dredge, 2006; Hall, 2000, 2011), Jamal and Getz (1995) define collaboration as a process of joint decision making among autonomous, key stakeholders of an inter-organizational domain to manage issues related to the planning and development of the domain. The following compares network governance and collaborative governance (Table 1).
Table 1: Comparison of Cooperative, Coordinative, and Collaborative Network Governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Cooperative</th>
<th>Coordinative</th>
<th>Collaborative</th>
<th>Ansell and Gash Collaborative Governance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Purposeful</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Encourages trust building at the beginning of collaborative process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Sharing</td>
<td>Guarded/known</td>
<td>Project related</td>
<td>Tacit/confidential</td>
<td>Goes beyond information sharing -consensus based decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment Orientation</td>
<td>To self/own organization</td>
<td>To project</td>
<td>To whole</td>
<td>Shifts &quot;ownership&quot; of decision making from the agency to the stakeholders acting collectively -Shared responsibility of the process -Requires incentives for participation and commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Self/own organization</td>
<td>Directed</td>
<td>Shared</td>
<td>Requires commitment to empowering weaker or underrepresented groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>To own organization</td>
<td>To project</td>
<td>To whole</td>
<td>To members and indirectly to the public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Likely a lead organization (Provan and Kenis, 2008)</td>
<td>Lead organization or Network Administrative organization (Provan and Kenis, 2008)</td>
<td>requires a &quot;unique leadership&quot; to promote communication and consensus building, builds trust</td>
<td>Critical ingredient Steers participants Promotes an &quot;organic leader&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperative</td>
<td>Coordinative</td>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>Ansell and Gash Collaborative Governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Risks/Rewards</strong></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Increase in benefits and risks to a degree</td>
<td>High risk/high reward</td>
<td>High risk, but sees collaboration as necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration</strong></td>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>Medium-term</td>
<td>Stable, long term</td>
<td>Stable, long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formal/Informal</strong></td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Formal, initiated by public agencies or institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Focus</strong></td>
<td>share information, space or referrals - Independent outcomes</td>
<td>information sharing, joint planning, decision-making and action among member organizations; predetermined goal</td>
<td>members working together to address complex issues through comprehensive planning, decision-making with an agreed upon mandate and goal</td>
<td>state-led governing arrangement with direct engagement of non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is consensus-oriented and deliberative -goal is to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Degree of Autonomy / Interdependence</strong></td>
<td>Fully autonomous</td>
<td>Autonomous</td>
<td>Highly interdependent</td>
<td>Highly interdependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-existing conditions (if any)</strong></td>
<td>formed under conditions of crisis or when other modes of operating have failed</td>
<td></td>
<td>appropriate when working on &quot;wicked problems&quot;</td>
<td>process requires face-to-face dialogue, trust building, and development of commitment and shared understanding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Table adapted from Mandell and Keast (2007, p. 578); Ansell and Gash (2008)*
2.3.3  Collaboration in Networks: Collaborative Network Governance

The concept of networks and its application to tourism policy and planning had roots in sociology and organizational science. In essence, networks are “groups of three or more legally autonomous organizations that work together to achieve not only their own goals but also a collective goal” (Provan and Kenis, 2008, p. 231). Networks can emerge into more formal and quasi-institutional structures and may share policy-making and implementation responsibility with the state (Rhodes, 1990). As such, network governance can be best described as the relationships between government, business and civil society and how these relationships shape the identification of issues, resource sharing, and collective action (Marsh, 1998).

The concept of collaborative governance, often considered as a type of network, is drawn from collaborative planning literature, with planning processes often conceptualized as a series of steps. The reality of planning processes is characterized by messy decision-making, conflict, and power imbalances. The idea of collaboration carries with it an inherent acknowledgement and recognition that, the problems and issues facing society cannot be unilaterally dealt with by a single body (Gray, 1985). Hence there is a need for coordination and consensus among and between the many different stakeholders in society regarding how policies are made to solve problems. Collaborative governance builds upon the core concept of governance in a collaborative decision making process to address public policy problems that involves cross-sectoral stakeholders (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Freeman, 1997; Huxham, 2000; Innes and Booher, 2003).

Ansell and Gash (2008, p. 544) define collaborative governance as:

A governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets.

This definition comes with six criteria:

1. The forum is initiated by public agencies or institutions. Ansell and Gash (2008) believe that public agencies have a distinctive leadership role.
2. Participants in the forum include non-state actors (stakeholders). The term “stakeholder” refers to the participation of citizens and organized groups. The term also refers to public agencies and non-state stakeholders.

3. Participants engage directly in decision-making and are not merely “consulted” by public agencies. Non-state stakeholders are also responsible for policy outcomes, thus it is pertinent that stakeholders are directly engaged in decision-making.

4. The forum is formally organized and meets collectively. This distinguishes collaborative governance from more casual and conventional forms of agency-interest group interaction.

5. The forum aims to make decisions by consensus (even if consensus is not achieved in practice). Although the final decision may lie in the authority of public agencies, the goal of collaboration is to reach a degree of consensus among stakeholders. The purpose of the formally organized and collective meetings is to be multilateral to strive toward consensus or to at least find areas of agreement.

6. The focus of collaboration is on public policy or public management. Ansell and Gash (2008) assert that focusing on public issues distinguishes collaborative governance from other forms of consensus decision-making, such as alternative dispute resolution or transformative mediation.

Further to the criteria, Ansell and Gash (2008) propose a model built on a wide literature review of 137 cases on collaborative governance, co-management, public participation, and so on. The model has four broad variables – starting conditions, institutional design, leadership and the collaborative process as seen in Figure 3. The starting conditions at the outset of collaboration can either facilitate or discourage cooperation among stakeholders (Ansell and Gash, 2008, p. 550), affecting the core components of the collaborative process, which includes face-to-face dialogue, trust building, commitment to process, shared understanding, and intermediate outcomes. At the very core, collaborative governance is a process in which sufficient trust in other stakeholders and commitment to the process works towards delivering win-win policies. Page (2008) adds that the success of collaborative decision-making depends on three factors: whether the participants are respected by the people affected by the decision, their expertise, and the group’s authority to make decisions.
Leaders of the collaboration process are seen as *catalysts* and are widely recognized as crucial for setting and maintaining the institutional design of the collaborative. In addition to facilitating dialogue and the exploring mutual gains, the leadership should be able to convey “…equal, horizontal relationships that are focused on delivering systems change” (Mandell and Keast, 2009, p.163).

Ultimately, this model of collaborative governance is not a silver bullet in decision-making or conflict resolution. The authors conclude that collaborative processes require time, trust, and interdependence.

The emergence of interest in the theory and practice of collaborative governance is part of a period of significant transformation of public institutions. Part of this transformation is a global shift in the role of the state from “provider” to “enabler” (Vernon *et al.*, 2005, p. 327). Through the processes of devolution, decentralization, and downsizing along with privatization and adoption of business techniques, the traditional “top-down”, centralized and managerial approach in tourism governance has transformed into a more “bottom-up”, decentralized and inclusive form of governance (Vernon *et al.*, 2005, p. 327).

**Source:** Ansell and Gash (2008, p. 550)
The “bottom-up” approach calls for increased participation from local communities and businesses to take on some of the management responsibilities (Hall, 2000; Shone and Ali Memon, 2008). As a result, partnerships and networks among government organizations and private and non-profit organizations have emerged with greater involvement of interest groups and citizens. In this regard, collaborative governance provides a framework to address the complex policy-making and decision-making processes involved with a larger group of stakeholders with various interests. Several other terms are also used to describe governance structures that involve cross-organizational working, such as “partnership”, “alliance”, “networks”, “coordination”, “cooperation”, and “joint working”.

In contrast, the concept of network governance refers to the network structure, described by Keast et al. (2004) as a structure which forms when individuals or organizations realize that working independently is not enough to solve a particular problem or issue, and that by actively working together, common goals and missions can be accomplished. In tourism policy and planning, such realization demonstrates the advantages of networks in building reciprocity, mutual interest, trust, and leadership in private-public relationships (Dredge, 2006).

2.3.4 Network Typologies: Cooperative, Coordinative, and Collaborative

Public administration and inter-organizational literature provides a breadth of analyses relevant to the study of networks. In addition to the number of network typologies proposed (Agranoff and McGuire, 2001; Bingham and O’Leary, 2006; Mandell and Keast, 2007), conceptual and theoretical frameworks related to network structures, processes, and outcomes have also been put forward (Agranoff and McGuire, 2003; Ansell and Gash, 2008; Bryson, Crosby, and Stone, 2006). For instance, Provan and Kenis (2008) identify three network modes of governance with a focus on the overall effectiveness (see Table 2), including participant-governed (shared governance), lead organization-governed, and network administrative organization-governed.
The three most common types of networks are known as the “3Cs”: cooperative, coordinative, and collaborative (Mandell and Keast, 2007). Connecting the 3Cs are six relational characteristics: trust, information sharing, commitment orientation, power, accountability, and leadership. First, cooperative networks are considered the most common and formed with the purpose of exchanging information or expertise. Members generally remain independent and only interact when necessary, leading to low levels of intensity of relationships. Cooperative network members also exhibit low trust.

In a coordinative network, the focus is on the integration of activities with other groups or organizations to provide efficiency. This type of network is one step beyond cooperative networks as network members have stronger relationships with a higher degree of risk involved. While participants remain independent, they may be willing to make adjustments at the margins when taking others into account. However, a common vision is not articulated as individual autonomy is still desired.

The members of the collaborative network are the most involved with the greatest amount of risk. These networks are appropriate when participants on working on complex, “wicked problems”, as participants realize they can no longer remain independent to resolve certain problems. Collaborative networks are also created when there is a crisis or when other modes of operating have failed. At this stage, participants become interdependent organizations trying to make changes to the existing system. As such, high levels of trust and dense relationships need to be established among participants for this network to be effective. In addition, the effectiveness of such arrangements depends “on whether the members of the collaborative network are able to develop new processes that will lead to new ways of
working, new structural arrangements and integration of the members into a new whole, which will lead to the accomplishment of innovative solutions” (Mandell and Keast, 2007, p. 579).

Conceptually, collaborative governance shares many similar features with collaborative network governance. Both concepts emphasize the active coordination of public agencies and stakeholder groups, working within decision-making processes. However, the difference between the policy network and collaborative governance as Ansell and Gash (2008) point out, is that “collaborative governance refers to an explicit and formal strategy of incorporating stakeholders into multilateral and consensus-oriented decision-making processes” (p.547) (italics added), while informal and implicit forms of cooperation are seen in network governance.

2.3.5 Forming Collaborative Network Governance: Challenges Going Forward

The potential of collaborative network governance in the tourism industry has been proposed as a means to integrate different policy perspectives. However, the capacity of integration may depend on the overall inclusiveness of the planning process and the characteristics of involved stakeholders (Hall, 2011). For instance, although particular incentives can vary greatly across organizations and networks (Oliver, 1990), the assumption is that participants must expect a returned benefit to justify any incurred costs from their involvement. As such, stakeholders are still likely to act likely in self-interest rather than the largest collective interest. In this regard, Agranoff and McGuire (2001) suggest building cohesion among network members by establishing a “program rationale” (p. 312).

The collaborative process also poses challenges in the successful formation and development of a network. Central to the process is the importance of building trust, leadership, and legitimacy in order to forge agreements and manage conflicts among members (Bryson et al. 2006). Equally important elements include the cycle of face-to-face dialogue and shared understanding proposed by Ansell and Gash (2008). However, a collaborative process that depends on the involvement of all stakeholders can be easily undermined. Reilly (2001) notes that, “When alternative avenues exist for resolution, it is theorized that a collaborative method of resolution is not optimal” (p.71). To mitigate such actions, Fung and Wright (2001) highlight the importance of balanced power of the collaborative to bring out more “earnest deliberation” (p.24).
The use of networks to work towards sustainable tourism objectives continues to be a challenge. A recent study by Erkuş-Öztürk and Eraydin (2010) on the contribution of networks to sustainable tourism in a Turkish destination concluded that despite the increase in local collaboration, economic considerations for network members far outweighed environmental and social motivations when it comes to tourism development.

Effective collaboration and partnerships among diverse stakeholders is undoubtedly complicated and difficult to achieve; it takes a committed membership, solid leadership, and a degree of trust to keep networks going.
SECTION THREE
THE STUDY AREA: LOWER ANGAT RIVER BASIN, BULACAN PROVINCE, PHILIPPINES

Tourism is a highly political phenomenon, the implications of which have been only rarely perceived and almost nowhere fully understood.
(Richter, 1989)

In order to fully assess governance options for Bulacan Province, this section will first provide an overview of the administrative structure and relevant national, regional, and provincial policies. Next, a more in-depth view into the Philippine and Bulacan tourism sector will be followed by thematic findings of the field research conducted in the Lower Angat Basin municipalities of Bulacan Province.

3.1 Geographic Overview of Bulacan Province

Bulacan Province, 50 km north of Manila, consists of 21 municipalities, 3 component cities, and 569 barangays. Bulacan borders the provinces of Pampanga to the west, Nueva Ecija to the north, Aurora and Quezon to the east, and Metro Manila and Rizal to the south.

Figure 4: Map of municipalities of Bulacan Province

Source: Bulacan Province Website (2012)
Table 3: Overview of Bulacan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Central Luzon (Region III)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Founded</td>
<td>August 15, 1578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>Malolos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1990: 1,505,219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000: 2,234,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010: 2,924,433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>2,774.85 km²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance Structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Component Cities (3):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malolos City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meycauayan City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>San Jose del Monte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipalities (21):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angat</td>
<td>Marilao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balagtas</td>
<td>Norzagaray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baliuag</td>
<td>Obando</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bocaue</td>
<td>Pandi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulacan</td>
<td>Paombong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bustos</td>
<td>Plaridel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calumpit</td>
<td>Pulilan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dona Remedios Trinidad</td>
<td>San Ildefonso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guiguinto</td>
<td>San Miguel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hagonoy</td>
<td>San Rafael</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Santa Maria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barangays: 569</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Use</td>
<td>Agriculture 37% (96,547 ha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grassland 22% (60,000 ha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forest 28% (74,287 ha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Built-up area 5.58% (14,647 ha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fish ponds 6.5% (17,000 ha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Water bodies 1.25% (3,255 ha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbouring Major Cities</td>
<td>Metro Manila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pampanga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nearest International Airport</td>
<td>Ninoy Aquino International Airport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clark International Airport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Geographic Features</td>
<td>Sierra Madre mountain range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Angat River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pampanga River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Industries</td>
<td>Agribusiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aquaculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information and Communications Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Industrial estate and parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mineral (limestone, marble) extraction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: PPDO (2010)
Bulacan Province, located north of Metro Manila, has had tourism on and off its development agenda in the last decade due to changes in political leadership. In some cases, some municipalities are more actively pursuing tourism development.

### 3.2 Legal and Policy Frameworks for Planning and Tourism

#### 3.2.1 Philippine Administrative Structure

The Philippines is the world’s second largest archipelago with over 7,100 islands with a total land area of 300,000 km². The country’s administrative structure is divided into three geopolitical layers: national, regional, and local (Figure 5). The National represents the Republic of the Philippines, currently lead by Benigno S. Aquino III. At the regional level, the Philippines is divided into 17 administrative regions, with Bulacan Province located in Region III, Central Luzon. The function of the Regional Offices can be described as the liaison agency between the national government and the Local Government Units in each Region. Local refers to the Local Government Units which compose of the hierarchy of provinces, component cities and municipalities, and barangays.

Tourism policy and legislation similarly follow the geopolitical administrative structure. At the national level, tourism activity and promotion in the Philippines is under the jurisdiction of the Department of Tourism (DOT), with special area planning functions under the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA). The functions of both the DOT and TIEZA are detailed in the Tourism Policy Act of 2009. Functions of Regional Tourism Offices, defined in the Tourism Act of 2009, are to mainly implement laws, policies, plans, programs, rules and regulations of the DOT. While the creation of the regional office is to act in coordination with the LGUs, tourism planning is still characterized by a top-down process as the decisions and plans originate from the national government. At the local level, tourism offices may exist at the LGUs, should tourism be a priority. Provinces, municipalities, and cities are all considered as LGUs, with provinces higher in the administrative hierarchy.
3.2.2 National Political and Policy Context

National politics has had profound influence on tourism development in the Philippines. During Marcos’ rule, many development projects were implemented to promote Philippines’ tourism industry to further his political objectives and as project a good image of his administration. Marcos’ extravagant spending on one hand contributed to national economic development yet was marred with corruption and ‘crony capitalism’ to achieve unarticulated and covert political goals (Richter, 1989; 1996).

Post-Marcos, tourism persists to the current administration as a national economic priority, with every administration’s Medium Term Development Plan identifying tourism as one of the tools for poverty alleviation through economic development. The Philippines today, under President Benigno S. Aquino III, has set out national imperatives in the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan 2011 – 2016 (MTPDP) and the Philippine National Tourism Development Plan 2011 – 2016. The MTPDP is a broad nation-wide development plan with five main strategies aimed at increasing economic competitiveness to generate massive employment; improving access to financing to meet needs of the public; increasing infrastructure investments; instilling transparent and responsive governance; and lastly developing human resources through improved social services and protection (NEDA, 2011). Tourism priorities under the competitive economy strategy targets 10 million foreign tourists by 2016.
Similarly, the Philippine National Tourism Development Plan 2011 – 2016 lays out a tourism development framework to guide national and local government. This recent plan prioritizes infrastructure development in strategic clusters as well as diversifying the tourism product to include heritage and cultural forms of tourism. Also recognized are the institutional gaps in tourism development at national, regional and local levels, which feed into inadequate tourism transportation networks, lower standards of tourism services and facilities, insufficient education and training, and slower pace of private tourism investments. The original target of 6.3 million foreign tourists by 2016 has recently been reset to 10 million given the gains from the international markets. Given the medium-term time frame of this plan, the plan continues to focus on physical development and marketing strategies. The national policies articulated in these plans direct Regional Development Councils and the LGUs for local implementation.

Tourism Act 2009

The Tourism Act was passed by the Philippine Congress in May 2009 with the purpose of impacting tourism planning, development and promotion, in the same way that local governance was altered by the LGC. Its general provision is to harness tourism’s potential “as an engine of socio-economic growth and cultural affirmation to generate investment, foreign exchange and employment and to mold an enhanced sense of national pride for all Filipinos” (Republic of the Philippines Act 9593, Section 1). In addition to the organizational restructuring of national tourism entities, the Act specifies the need for national tourism action plan to be implemented by national and local governments with participation of local communities, non-government organizations, people’s organizations, and the private sector. LGUs are also encouraged to use their powers under the LGC to ensure the preparation and implementation of a tourism development plan, the enforcement of standards and the collection of statistical data for tourism purposes. The plan ideally would integrate zoning, land use, infrastructure development, heritage and environmental protection, and the national system of standards for tourism enterprises (Republic of the Philippines Act 9593, Section 37). The Act also states that in provinces and municipalities that identified tourism as a major economic activity, a municipal, city or provincial tourism officer with a permanent appointment will be hired.

It is speculated that the LGU’s autonomy in tourism development may be constrained by the Tourism Act provisions where most related activities at the local level have to be coordinated with DOT. At the same time, given the limited financial and technical capacity at the LGU level in Bulacan, the
coordination and assistance from the DOT could be beneficial. The Tourism Act may be a new challenge and a test for national-local coordination. In addition, it will be an exercise in anticipatory local tourism planning.

3.2.3 Regional Context: Central Luzon (Region III)

Bulacan is one of the seven provinces of Central Luzon, which covers approximately 21,500 km². It is bounded by the National Capital Region and Manila Bay on the south, the China Sea to the west, and the Pacific Ocean on the northern boundary. Aurora, Bataan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Tarlac, and Zambales are the other provinces in Central Luzon. Central Luzon has two sets of Plans which lay out the development framework for Region III.

First, the long term Central Luzon Regional Physical Framework Plan 2005 – 2030 (CL-RPFP) is intended to guide the region’s preferred physical development to accommodate growth in the 25 year period. The plan also takes into consideration national development goals and objectives, while fulfilling the region’s role within the national economy. Tourism is recognized as an economic asset to be further developed in the CL-RPFP. The “W-shaped” spatial strategy is comprised of growth corridors, with the western portion from Sta. Cruz in the north to the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority to the south designated as the tourism corridor. Bulacan lies within the industrial and agricultural growth corridors.

The Central Luzon Regional Development Plan 2011 – 2016 (CL-RDP) is the other regional plan which provides a regional framework under the national MTPDP. Tourism is one of the primary development challenges and opportunity identified in the plan, with goals of increasing the inflow of tourists in the region. Some of the key challenges noted include:

- **Fragmented tourism promotion.** There is no regional program to link regional destinations and attractions. Marketing efforts are often location or LGU-specific.
- **Preservation of environmental integrity and quality is not integral to tourism development.** Tourism development remains attraction-specific, with weak attempts to involve or enhance surrounding environment.
- **Lack of definitive market position or brand of Central Luzon tourism.** Industry stakeholders believe that regional promotions would benefit from a branding of Central Luzon.
- **Establishing a culture of tourism with stakeholders participating and contributing to tourism promotion.** Many tourism businesses and LGUs promote their individual establishments or
municipalities. The potential of promoting one another can build synergy among the tourism stakeholders.

- **Weak local government capacity for tourism promotion and development.** A major challenge faced by many LGUs is the lack of trained and experienced staff to promote and plan for untapped tourism potential.

Tourism objectives are listed under Goal 6: Effective, Responsive and Transparent Governance, of the CL-RDP’s Development Goals and Objectives. This goal aims to clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of LGUs and the national government agencies in the region. The tourism objectives under this goal are geared at the physical elements of tourism, urged as collaborations between the national government and LGUs. Other tourism strategies emphasize the need for public-private partnerships to fund tourism facilities.

In terms of sustainability measures, the CL-RDP asserts that the sustainability is the region’s preferred path, with “Central Luzon: a Sustainable and Caring Global Gateway through Private-Public Partnership and Growth for All” as the vision tagline (CL-RDP, 2011, p.25). It is clear that sustained economic growth continues to be paramount. Tied to economic growth is the goal of poverty alleviation and equitable distribution of wealth. To measure the plan’s vision, indicators measuring foreign direct investments and Gross Regional Domestic Product per capita are economic determinants. Other measures include poverty incidence, percentage of low income families, and peso spending per hectare of critical watershed.

Strategically, the CL-RDP is appropriate for the given six year time frame to focus on gateway hubs of the region. Nonetheless, the plan is vague on the actions to be taken to increase stakeholder participation and increasing local government capacity.

**Central Luzon Tourism Action Plan 2011 – 2016 (Draft)**

The Central Luzon Tourism Action Plan 2011 – 2016 (CL-TAP) was in its draft stages at the time of research. The purpose of the Tourism Action Plan is to implement the Philippine National Tourism Development Plan in Region 3, with the primary objective to provide a framework to guide and propel tourism promotion and development in the Region through the identification of key strategic interventions.
The Draft Action Plan recognizes a similar set of tourism development issues and challenges as the Regional Development Plan, listing tourism product development and marketing; access; and governance and human resource development as major themes. While strategic actions emphasize competitive tourism destination and products, other notable proposed actions include revitalizing local tourism councils, capacity building at LGUs, and the creation of development plans at local and regional areas.

The framework sets out tourism development areas by assigning core themes to eight provinces, with Bulacan as the cultural/historic centre of the Region. The participation of Bulacan Tourism Officials at several Action Plan meetings allowed high-level engagement of ideas and concerns from the LGUs.

3.2.4 From National to Local: Devolution and Decentralization

The current policy and planning systems were formulated during the People Power presidency of Corazon Aquino from 1986 to 1992, resulting in the transformative Local Government Code of 1991 (Republic Act 7160) (“LGC”). At this time, the country was in a state of transition from the Ferdinand Marcos dictatorship that was characterized by centralized governance. As a result of Aquino’s reforms, the passing of the LGC has been described as “the most radical and comprehensive policy instrument of the Aquino administration to further its People Power agenda” (Gonzales, 1997, p.4). At the heart of this legislation was the perceived need to decentralize and unload major national government services to local governments that were presumed to have a better understanding of their constituencies (Brillantes, 2004; Lutz and Caldecott, 1996). As such, the purpose of the LGC is to reverse centuries of centralism by initiating devolution and decentralization of political and administrative power, authority, and responsibilities to provinces, cities, and municipalities, also known as Local Government Units (LGUs).

The characteristics of decentralization can be described by three major shifts (Gonzales, 1997, p.3-4). First, the shift from the national to the local is intended to bring government closer to the people. This involves the processes of deconcentration, which transfers power, authority, and responsibility to plan to local levels; and devolution, which transfers power and authority from the national government to the local governments. Second, the shift from state to private (business) sectors is a function of market liberalization and involves the privatization of state assets, programs and services. Lastly, the shift from state to civil society is intended to create self-organization, and the empowerment and participation of
people in systems of governance. The strong demand for decentralized governance from the Philippine civil society will likely increase the impact of citizen participation in politics and governance (Angeles and Magno, 2004).

**Tourism and the Local Government Code**

The LGC provides the authority to conduct tourism planning and development in LGUs. Section 17 of the Code specifies LGU’s responsibilities in basic services and facilities related to tourism development, tourism facilities, and the regulation and supervision of business concessions. Subject to the limitations of the LGC, LGUs have certain corporate powers and fiscal independence (Section 15 and Section 22) through taxation powers, an allocation of government funding from the Internal Revenue Allotments (IRA), and the ability to raise funds through bonds (Brillantes, 2004).

Provincial Tourism Offices and Municipal Tourism Offices are the two LGU units that have direct involvement in tourism. It is generally the responsibility of the Provincial Tourism Office to focus on tourism promotion for the province, with the licensing and regulation of tourism activities handled by the municipalities. A challenge faced by LGUs in generally, is the lack of trained and experienced tourism personnel. As a result, local tourism offices are mainly focused on coordination and organization of events and attending tourism road shows and fairs, rather than focusing on strategic planning.

Stakeholder participation and capacity building is encouraged by the LGC. Private sector participation is through the Provincial/Municipal/Barangay Tourism Councils, and is usually composed of 60% private entities and 40% government representatives and politicians. These councils act as local tourism network organization intended to promote tourism development in the area.

**3.2.5 Provincial Context: Tourism on Hold**

Bulacan Province is often regarded as a cultural Mecca of the Philippines, with numerous cultural festivities and rich historical heritage. The province’s history dates back to 1578, prior to the arrival of the Spaniards. Of major significance is the signing of the Pact of Biak-na-Bato in 1897 among brothers of the Revolutionaries (Figure 6). From 1898 to 1899, Malolos became the Capital of the First Philippine Republic, where the Malolos Constitution was drafted and ratified.
Today, Bulacan Province is rapidly industrializing given its close proximity to Metro Manila. The current governor, now entering his second term in office, continues to pursue a seven point agenda focused on
health; education; peace and order; nature and environment; good governance; livelihood; and history and culture. Although tourism development is not explicitly mentioned or actively pursued in his first term, tourism lends itself to many of the agenda items.

Bulacan’s tourism strongest tourism assets, as identified in the Central Luzon Draft Tourism Action Plan, are the cultural and historical sites and festivities. Unique festivals like the Kneeling Carabao in Pulilan (Figure 7) and the Horse Parade in Plaridel are complemented by the rich history in Biak-Na-Bato and the majestic heritage homes in San Miguel. Other burgeoning tourism activities include nature-based tourism and soon to be developed eco-parks with water sport activities in Angat, Bustos, and San Rafael. Calumpit has already built a dock for river cruises along the lower Angat River.

Table 4: Distribution of Regional Travellers in the Philippines, January – December 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Domestic visitors</th>
<th>International visitors</th>
<th>Overseas Filipinos</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bulacan Province</td>
<td>53,638</td>
<td>1,376</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>55,154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Luzon Region</td>
<td>1,557,746</td>
<td>147,170</td>
<td>12,411</td>
<td>1,717,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>21,047,604</td>
<td>4,908,545</td>
<td>276,868</td>
<td>26,233,017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Accommodation Establishments as submitted to Department Tourism Regional Offices, Department of Tourism. As of 5 March 2013

Provincial Plans and Tourism Context

In considering the plans at the provincial level, the Provincial Planning and Development Office (PPDO) were in the approval stages of a new Provincial Development and Physical Framework Plan (PDPFP) at the time of research. The PDPFP acts as the overall development vision of the province through the understanding of existing conditions and identifying key development issues, problems, goals, objectives, and targets of the province. The PDPFP is a key link in the network of plans, serving as a vertical link between local development objectives and regional and national priorities.

The vertical linkages of tourism plans are less straightforward at the provincial level than the PDPFP. The Tourism Act of 2009 does not mandate LGUs to create tourism plans; they are only encouraged to the powers in the LGC to prepare and implement tourism development plans that integrate zoning, land use, infrastructure development, heritage and environmental protection imperatives all which encourages sustainable tourism development (Section 37, Tourism Act of 2009).
It is at the provincial level where the trail of tourism planning ends. While the PDPFP incorporates aspects of tourism as part of the economy, the absence of a provincial tourism plan results from a combination of factors. As discussed by Hitchcock, King, and Parnwell (1993), states in Southeast Asia tend to focus on and conduct tourism promotions. In Bulacan, the Provincial Cultural and Tourism Office (PCTO) is primarily tasked with promotional activities and planning public events at the provincial Capital of Malolos. While a previous draft tourism master plan was on the table, the plan was not adopted by the Sangguniang Panlalawigan\(^1\) Committee on Tourism.

Rather, in March of 2012, the Tourism Code of Bulacan was passed to establish clearer responsibilities and authority of the PCTO. The Code also established specific tourism business licensing regulations for resorts, hotels, and travel agencies. Given the political circumstances, the PCTO worked towards a different project by exercising their powers prescribed in the LGC.

Following the passing of the Tourism Code, the PCTO launched the 24K Tourism Icons of Bulacan in July of 2012. The program helps municipal tourism officers in the province to pursue a designated tourism brand in their tourism planning. It is intended to boost the province’s tourism industry and its economy. While the intent of the program provides direction for Bulacan municipalities, it was clear from the interviews that many of the smaller municipalities do not have the financial means, political incentives, or personnel capacity to carry out the plans. While all tourism officials were supportive of the plan, the implementation of the program has been limited to the hanging of promotional banners at civic areas and municipal halls.

### 3.3 Existing Tourism Networks

Four main tourism networks operate in Bulacan Province: (1) the Provincial Tourism Council (PTC), (2) the Association of Tourism Officers of Bulacan, (3) the Bulacan Association of Resort Owners (BARO), and (4) the Bulacan Association of Travel Agencies (BATA). Other existing industry networks which were not consulted for this research include the Restaurant and Caterers’ Organization, and the Tourist Guides Association of Bulacan.

\(^1\) Sangguniang Panlalawigan, also known as the Provincial Council or Provincial Board, is the legislature of the provinces. They are tasked with passing ordinances and resolutions for the provincial administrative branch.
First, the Provincial Tourism Council (PTC), mandated in the Bulacan Tourism Code, acts as a consultative and policy-making body tasked with regulating, promoting, and coordinating all tourism programs and activities within the province. The PTC also finds ways and means to attract investors for the Bulacan tourism industry. The PTC is comprised of different Tourism Officers of the municipalities and cities within the province together with the different travel agency associations and other private or non-governmental travel groups accredited by the Province. All municipalities and cities in the province are required to designate a Tourism Officer as representation at the PTC. The PTC shall also include the Chairman of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan Committee on Tourism, the Bulacan Environment and Natural Resource Office (BENRO), Provincial Planning and Development Office (PPDO), President of Bulacan State University (BSU) and Provincial History, Arts, Cultural and Tourism Office (PHACTO). The PTC convenes once a month with the possibility to call emergency meetings. As of 2011, there were 26 members in the PTC listed in Bulacan Executive Order No. 13-2011.

At the time of research in May 2013, the author was informed that the PTC has been inactive since 2010. According to a Provincial Tourism Officer, the PTC’s inactivity was a political decision when the new Governor, Wilhelmino Sy-Alvarado, was elected into office. The Governor was not opposed to tourism but also did not consider it a high priority and thus, tourism funding at the PCTO was cut by more than fifty percent. Local informants have indicated a potential reinstatement of the PTC as the Governor enters his second term in office. Before 2010 however, there were 30 members.

The Association of Tourism Officers of Bulacan is comprised of municipal and provincial tourism officers working in Bulacan, with regular meetings to discuss any plans and projects. However, without a budget or any major projects this year, the Association has been inactive.

BARO and BATA are two specific tourism industry networks focused on furthering their interests as business owners. BARO, formed in 1995, is one of the earliest tourism networks in Bulacan. They hold monthly meetings except in April and May to discuss projects, plans, problems, and attendance at travel marts. Tourism officers are invited to every meeting. Currently, one of BARO’s top priorities is to become more united as an organization to fight a proposed provincial amusement tax. BARO also wants to work on more aggressive marketing, offering promotional packages and marketing Bulacan as the wave pool capital in the Philippines. BATA operates similarly to BARO, and the two associations work together on building promotional packages.
3.4 SWOT Analysis

The promise of tourism generated wealth drives many provinces and regions in the Philippines to actively pursue tourism developing through marketing and promotions. In Bulacan however, tourism has been set aside for other notable endeavors as part of the Governor’s Seven Point Agenda. With new projects currently underway in parts of Bulacan, this is a good time to assess Bulacan’s tourism landscape for its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT), as a starting point of discussion.

Table 5: SWOT Analysis of Tourism in Bulacan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location &amp; Transport</td>
<td>Close proximity to the National Capital Region (Metro Manila)</td>
<td>Inter-municipal transport systems slow and inefficient (i.e. main roads are often congested, thus time consuming)</td>
<td>BARO and BATA have the opportunity to attend more travel fairs and promote Bulacan Province to Manila residents or to foreigners looking for an authentic Filipino experience</td>
<td>Despite proximity to Manila and airport, competition with other provinces and destinations remains high in areas surrounding the NCR</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Good air access from the Ninoy Aquino International Airport. Future expansion of Clark International Airport will provide more budget airline options</td>
<td>Visitors generally pass through Bulacan Province or stay in Pampanga Province</td>
<td>New promotional signage could be put up along the NLEX and Plaridel-Bustos By-pass Road</td>
<td>Higher value transportation investments (Plaridel-Bustos By-pass road, NLEX), bypasses many Bulacan municipalities</td>
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<td>Themes</td>
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<td>Opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>LGU and tourism industry</strong></td>
<td><strong>Capacity</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Well-trained provincial tourism officers, regarded as leaders by industry members</td>
<td>Lower capacity for tourism promotions and planning at municipal-level</td>
<td>Under the Tourism Act of 2009, LGUs may request assistance from the DOT</td>
<td>Without adequate political will and budget, the tourism capacity at LGUs may remain at status quo</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Industry members seem to have an established relationship with tourism staff and are aware of industry groups</td>
<td>The interdependence among the network members may not be strong enough for collaborative forms of governance</td>
<td>The established relationship among the industry members could be beneficial for future formal governance structures</td>
<td>The weak interdependence among network members may inhibit future formal collaborative network governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>Bulacan State University offers a tourism and hospitality program, with many students participating in internships in Bulacan</td>
<td>BSU tourism program can be better connected to the tourism industry (i.e. internships with both public and private sectors)</td>
<td>BSU’s current partnerships with universities in Manila, China, Hong Kong, and possibly Canada could see benefits in the quality of tourism education</td>
<td>The current tourism market in Bulacan is unable to absorb new tourism graduates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political</strong></td>
<td>Development-oriented political leadership and administration</td>
<td>Politicians may not be well-versed in land use planning or economic development, which may affect the quality of dialogue and action taken</td>
<td>The political leadership in tourism shown in Angat, Bustos and San Rafael can have significant influence once the eco-park projects are completed</td>
<td>The lack of priority of politicians may be a factor of fiscal conservatism of LGU governments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>Strengths</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tourism Products and Promotions</strong></td>
<td>The adoption of the Bulacan Tourism Code in 2012 is a step towards more oversight and regulation of the tourism industry by the Province</td>
<td>Low supply of DOT-accredited accommodations and resorts</td>
<td>Some tourism officers expressed a keen interest in pursuing agri-tourism and highlighting specialty food products</td>
<td>Bulacan lacks a clear direction to guide tourism planning and development especially without a tourism master plan. Rather, a promotional approach is pursued</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCTO staff are well-trained in the marketing and promotion of Bulacan tourism products</td>
<td>Promotional materials provided online and in print lack clear mapping and information on destinations</td>
<td>Several unique cultural and religious fiestas and festivals held throughout the year can be more aggressively marketed</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tourist demand for cultural forms of tourism may not be as strong as other forms of mainstream tourism (i.e. resort tourism)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The (draft) CL-TAP has been regarded as an inclusive process, according to PCTO staff</td>
<td>The (draft) CL-TAP’s 2011 – 2016 time frame is relatively short, leaving little time for implementation before the planning process begins again in 2017</td>
<td>Opportunities for more regional cooperation to promote Bulacan at more visited destinations</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other established destinations in Central Luzon (Region III) could be regarded as direct competition to Bulacan (i.e. Angeles City, San Antonio, Clark)</td>
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<tr>
<td>There are many community leaders who, if interested, can provide fresh perspectives and ideas in tourism and community involvement</td>
<td>Tourism development for communities is not an economic panacea for poverty alleviation</td>
<td>There are opportunities for the churches to be more involved in hosting tours and upgrading their museums for tourism purposes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Externalities and Land Use Considerations</strong></td>
<td>A new Provincial Physical Development Framework can provide a land use component to future tourism planning</td>
<td>Tourism needs to be better integrated into land use planning frameworks and communities, though some progress has been made in terms of the future eco-park development in Angat, Bustos, and San Rafael</td>
<td>There has been some public interest towards developing more nature-based tourism (eco-park projects by Angat, Bustos, and San Rafael)</td>
<td>Climate change, severe weather events, frequent flooding of lower basin municipalities</td>
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<td>Areas of environmental degradation along the Angat River – pollution, siltation, and over population of water lilies</td>
<td>Unique heritage homes exist across the Province. There is an opportunity to provide incentives for more conservation and maintenance of these structures</td>
<td>Several competing uses along the Angat River (where eco-park developments are occurring in Bustos, Angat, and San Rafael)</td>
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<td>• Mining</td>
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<td>• Quarrying</td>
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<td>• Logging</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Informal settlers</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Legislation</strong></td>
<td>LGC provisions allow LGUs to engage in public-private partnerships and joint ventures for tourism</td>
<td>Limited knowledge of the extent of partnerships and joint ventures for tourism</td>
<td>There is potential to enter into public-private partnerships and to work with NGOs and</td>
<td>LGU governments generally are fiscally conservative and are cautious about debt</td>
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### SWOT Analysis

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<tr>
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<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ventures with People’s Organizations and NGOs&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>purposes at the provincial level</td>
<td>People’s Organizations in the tourism industry</td>
<td></td>
<td>The non-priority tourism areas, as deemed by the national government, may not be able to receive assistance from the DOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tourism Act of 2009 provides clearer guidance on DOT responsibilities and the shared governance relationship with LGUs</td>
<td>The Tourism Act of 2009 does not adequately address sustainable tourism development</td>
<td>The shared governance between the DOT and the LGU is an opportunity to build capacity at the LGU level, especially if technical and/or financial assistance is provided</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The elements presented in this SWOT analysis are further explored and discussed in the following sections and inform some of the recommendations made in Section Five. The author hopes that the PCTO can adapt and add to this SWOT analysis to better inform future planning and coordination with the private sector and community groups.

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<sup>2</sup> Sections 34, 35 and 36 of Chapter IV of the Local Government Code, entitled Relations with People and Non-Governmental Organizations includes the following provisions:

- "Local government units shall promote the establishment and operation of POs and NGOs to become active partners in the pursuit of local autonomy (section 34).
- Local government units may enter into joint ventures and such other cooperative arrangements with POs and NGOs to engage in the delivery of certain basic services, capability-building and livelihood projects and to develop local enterprises designed to improve productivity and income, diversify agriculture, spur rural industrialization, promote ecological balance and enhance the economic and social well-being of the people (section 35).
- A local government unit may, through its local chief executive and with the concurrence of the sanguine concerned, provide assistance, financial or otherwise to such POs and NGOs for economic, socially-oriented, environmental or cultural projects to be implemented within its territorial jurisdiction (section 36)"
3.5 Thematic Findings

The interviews conducted with provincial and municipal tourism officers, planning officers, and environmental officers, as well as private sector representatives and academia, provided not only contextual information but also findings under four main themes. These themes will be used to assess practical and realistic governance options to further tourism planning and development.

3.5.1 Politics, Funding, and Capacity

Two dominant themes uncovered in the interviews were political influence and inadequate tourism funding, which are intricately tied. While the Filipino political environment goes beyond the scope of this research, its influence in the results cannot be ignored. Almost all respondents were quite critical of the political process, which one academic respondent called a “political vacuum”. The lack of continuity in tourism planning is also an unfortunate by-product of politics.

Since the passing of the LGC, the reality of budget constraints of LGUs is overwhelming for many municipalities given the expanded responsibilities. From a planning perspective, the trickle-down effect of national plans to the LGU level is a logical one, as broad policies are shaped by local priorities and perspectives intended by decentralization. However, as the national government continues to adopt laws and policies, the capacity of LGUs are further strained without a national funding scheme to local authorities responsible of creating and implementing these plans. In the aforementioned draft Central Luzon Tourism Action Plan, the draft CL-TAP implements a national vision upon the provinces without the promise of funding. Assistance from the DOT is channeled through the regional entity and according to one academic respondent, is strife with political influence. Without the support of key political figures, most of the interviewed LGU tourism offices found it difficult to complete any substantial tourism planning work beyond the status quo.

The financial capacity at the LGU is further strained by political will because the tourism budget is derived from the mayor’s office, and not from stable annual allocations that formal departments receive. As such, tourism budgets are always vulnerable. For instance, the provincial tourism budget has decreased in the last few years from over 5 million pesos per year from 2003 to 2009, to just over 2 million pesos this year. In one interview, a municipal tourism officer said, “It is difficult to function under
the Mayor’s Office. There are limited resources and finances, and we only have enough budget to fund the annual festivities.”

Political influence also caused the PTC to be put on hold for the last three years based on a new political agenda. This not only inhibited the formal collaboration process from moving forward with new plans and projects in the province, a proposed tourism master plan also suffered the consequences. While some municipalities with mayoral support have continued with pursuing tourism development (i.e. Angat and Bustos), other municipalities with lower capacities and less political will have seen stagnant tourism in the last few years. In these municipalities where tourism is regarded as less of a priority, the designated tourism officers are also assigned one or two other roles. One tourism officer stated, “It is difficult to find time to focus on any tourism planning when I have so many tasks to complete in my primary role as a land use planner.” Another tourism officer added, “I have many good ideas for tourism [...] but the politicians don’t always take [the] advice of their staff.”

The municipality of Bustos exemplifies the power of political support in tourism development and staff capacity. In the past few years, the mayor of Bustos has been actively pursuing sustainable forms of tourism development. As such, Bustos established its own Tourism Council to formulate and implement policies and projects. Several tourism projects are currently underway, some of which include the promotion of arts and culture through the provision of art and music classes. The most recent plan is a phased “eco-park” development, where upgrades of the public facilities along Bustos Dam will provide for residents to enjoy the trees and partake in water sport activities. The National Irrigation Administration worked in partnership with Bustos, Angat, and San Rafael to bring these plans to reality. The Philippine Tourism Authority is also assisting with market research for the eco-park. Other considerations such as the ecological health of the water is currently being integrated with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) and the future relocation of informal settlers will take about three years to complete with the assistance of the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

3.5.2 Friendly Relationships among Members of the Tourism Industry

The relationship aspect (i.e. high levels of trust with low conflict) in collaborative network governance is one of the most important components leading to effective outcomes. When respondents were asked about the relationship with public and/or private entities, it was clear from the interviews that the PCTO is quite highly regarded by their colleagues given the strong leadership role PCTO plays in tourism
promotions. All respondents at municipalities, BARO, and BATA indicated that they view the PCTO as an integral part of the tourism industry in Bulacan and that all coordination and future collaboration be conducted through the province’s leadership. When probed about the inactivity of the PTC, most informants did hold a strong opinion on the matter.

When asked about the consultative relationship between the public and private sectors, the level of engagement is usually project dependent and publicly-led as private operators don’t generally bring forward their ideas to the tourism officers. In some instances, private operators may visit the tourism officer to ask about process and business opportunities. Private organizations expressed satisfaction with the current extent of engagement because tourism officers are invited to their association meetings. Although it appears that public-private relationships are positive, there has been some dissatisfaction from BARO regarding an amusement tax of 25% (gross receipts) proposed throughout the province. Strangely, one of the top priorities of BARO is to become more united as an organization to fight the amusement tax, yet BARO also expressed that the inactivity of the PTC was “fine”. It was not made clear through what avenues the organization was to negotiate the proposed tax, but the seat they hold on the Board of the PTC was not crucial for BARO in this matter.

Beyond the current state of “friendly” relations between tourism’s public and private sectors, most respondents did not suggest any critical steps for improvement. Undoubtedly, respondents agreed that more cooperation and coordination will help further tourism in Bulacan, but they are also mindful and realistic about the political and financial impositions. With the exception of Bustos, who has seen some of the benefits of public-private partnerships, the reality of these barriers clearly disincentivizes further cooperation and coordination among members of the tourism industry. As such, the results show that the two private sector entities, BARO and BATA, have closer ties as their networks as their interdependence can continue to function without much input from the public sector.

3.5.3 Transportation

Infrastructure is a common concern and constant struggle for many countries in the developing world. The issues around transportation certainly affect the lives of residents and impacts economic efficiencies. In almost all the interviews, respondents brought up the issues around road infrastructure capacity and the “double-edged sword” of providing efficiency. Most major routes in the lower Angat River basin
municipalities are choked with congestion (which is often only one-lane in each direction). To provide some relief, the national government has opened a Bustos-Plaridel Bypass Road to decongest the traffic at the Pan-Philippine Highway by 40 percent. This new bypass road passes through the municipalities of Balagtas, Guiguito, Plaridel, Bustos, and San Rafael. This bypass road was regarded as both a blessing and a curse by respondents. Some respondents feel the bypass road takes away from the tourism potential in their municipalities because vehicles can drive through without stopping and contributing to their local economy. On the other hand, private entities like BARO see opportunities to put up advertisements along the bypass road to promote tourism products.

3.5.4 Overall tourism potential of Bulacan

While not all Bulacan municipalities have tourism potential, provincial promotional programs like 24K still designate a “brand” to each municipality, which could take away from the benefits of clustered tourism destinations. Table 5 broadly summarizes the tourism potentials and limitations from the interviewed groups. Most respondents see increased potential for cultural and heritage tourism and nature-based tourism in Bulacan Province with some other proposals aligned with personal or organizational positions.

The long list of limitations clearly shows the political barrier as aforementioned, as well as other broader challenges like conflicting land uses and lack of data and planning expertise. Undoubtedly, many of these issues directly and indirectly impact current and future tourism conditions and would require inter-agency and cross-sectoral coordinative and collaborative action. As demonstrated by Bustos, Angat, and San Rafael’s Eco-Park projects, interventions from several national government departments were required to provide expertise and funding. Horizontal linkages at the local scale were mostly inter-municipal and inter-departmental, with some consultation of established NGOs and private organizations.

Lastly, respondents were asked to list three things in their expert opinion that would further the tourism industry in Bulacan Province. Intensive marketing, increased planning, and greater public and private investments were the three most common answers given.
Table 6: Indicated potentials and limitations of tourism in Lower Angat River Basin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewed Groups</th>
<th>Potentials</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Tourism Officers** | • Cultural and heritage tourism  
                       • Nature-based tourism  
                       • Commercial tourism (i.e. entertainment, floating restaurant)  
                       • Potential synergy with regional tourism action plan | • Financial shortcomings  
                       • Political decisions  
                       • Lack of marketing and advertising  
                       • Lack of (accredited) accommodations  
                       • Transportation inefficiencies  
                       • Lack of conservation of heritage buildings  
                       • Limited data  
                       • Lack of expertise |
| **PPDO** | • Cultural and heritage tourism  
                       • Some nature-based tourism | • Lack of tourism potential in many areas  
                       • Potential conflicting land uses  
                       • Other more pressing matters |
| **BATA** | • Cultural and heritage tourism  
                       • Some nature-based tourism  
                       • Resort tourism | • Lack of marketing and advertising |
| **BARO** | • Cultural and heritage tourism  
                       • Nature-based tourism  
                       • Resort tourism  
                       • Wave pool capital of Central Luzon | • Lack of political will to develop tourism  
                       • Lack of marketing and advertising  
                       • Could be more coordination between public and private organizations  
                       • Unemployment of tourism graduates in Bulacan  
                       • Lack of private investment in Bulacan |
| **Academics** | • Cultural and heritage tourism  
                       • Nature-based tourism | • Disconnect between national plans and funding  
                       • Informal settlements along Angat River  
                       • Pollution along Angat River  
                       • Conflicting land uses |
SECTION FOUR
IMPLICATIONS FOR BULACAN TOURISM GOVERNANCE

4.1 Overview

At the outset of this research project, the goal was to explore governance options in Bulacan Province with the agenda of increasing collaboration among stakeholders towards sustainable tourism. However, the results of this initial qualitative research indicate that the role of government in tourism planning and development are under great pressures and constraints that are beyond the immediate control of tourism officers. The interviewed individuals fully understand the potentials and limitations of tourism in Bulacan Province yet there is insufficient institutional capacity to provide surmountable action in tourism planning and governance. Without adequate public budgets from both the national and provincial governments to plan for and implement policies and programs, the need for provincial-scale tourism network governance is negated. From the private sector’s viewpoint, the limitations of public administration and political decisions pose relatively high risk and may decrease their motivation to be part of a publicly-lead network.

At the same time, there appears to be a sense of sensibility in not having unrequited faith in tourism as a major economic contributor in Bulacan’s economic sector. The amount of competition for domestic tourists and foreign visitors especially at the regional and national scale may put dreams and hopes for tourism in Bulacan into more realistic perspectives. However, the realistic views should also not inhibit Bulacan from furthering its tourism agenda at a practical pace in the near-term and long-term. From the SWOT analysis in Section Three, it was clear that Bulacan’s strengths and opportunities lie in the cultural and historical destinations, with some progress in nature-based tourism.

The following discussion will explore further into the role of government in tourism and the implications of governance and sustainable development in Bulacan Province.

4.2 Collaborative network governance

Based on the findings, collaborative network governance is not practical in the near-term for Bulacan Province at the moment. Although a similar publicly-led formal network has functioned and is technically still in existence under legislation, it is uncertain whether the Provincial Tourism Council will
be revived in the near future in the Governor’s second term in office (2013-2016). On the positive side, the results indicated that outside the political realm, the current working relationship among public tourism officials and the private sectors are healthy, with a high degree of respect and trust. An interesting observation from both public and private respondents is that neither appeared to express a major concern that the PTC was inactive. As mentioned, they may be well aware and used to the political circumstances in the Philippines and the budget constraints that come with political decisions. Overall, it is assumed that the current working relationship between the key tourism actors display elements or characteristics of cooperative and coordinative governance models.

Currently, the interdependence among stakeholder groups is weak, as one actor can continue to function without the other. For instance, although tourism officers and private sector representatives all said they had friendly relationships with one another, the level of interaction between the actors did not indicate a strong interdependence among these players. Their interdependence may be characterized as pooled (Thompson, 1967), in the sense that the quality of tourism in Bulacan Province requires separate, independent actions of each actors. As such, this form of interdependence can be deemed to be weaker than what is suggested for effective collaborative network governance where members’ interdependence requires them to work closely with one another to pursue shared and individual objectives.

In contrast, there does not appear to be much conflict between the self- and collective interests of the actors in the tourism industry, as they can all benefit if they work together to increase the number of tourists and enhance the quality of the tourism experience. If public and private actors make the decision to come together and work more collaboratively, there is considerable room for synergy if these stakeholders are willing to focus more on creating a common agenda, to coordinate their actions to maximize the impact of public and private expenditures, and to collaborate in ways to generate innovative and effective solutions to the challenges they face as a collective. Unfortunately, as noted by Huxham (2003), the possibility of achieving this “collaborative advantage” may face “collaborative inertia”, which ultimately undermines the likelihood of generating the potential synergy and thus often leads to more disappointing output in reality. The importance of cultivating the reciprocal relationships that exist throughout the tourism sector could help generate the bond needed to hold a network together (Booher & Innes, 2002).
Given the current circumstances, a coordinative network governance structure appears to be the best option for Bulacan Province. The author suspects that the PTC operated like a coordinative network as opposed to a collaborative network since a review of the meeting minutes showed project-specific discussions. The level of deliberation is unclear, given the brief meeting notes. Members of the PTC also shared projects of their own organization as a form of information-sharing and awareness-building. This form of shared governance did not establish high levels of interdependence since the members of the PTC retained a degree of autonomy.

4.3 The Role of Government

The question remains, without the political support of continuing the PTC, what role can the government play in establishing another coordinative network? It is widely recognized that governments play a key role in tourism development, especially in developing countries (Jenkins and Henry, 1982; WTO, 1996). Regrettably, much of mainstream tourism research does not address the political dimensions and the complexity it adds to tourism outcomes. In the Philippine context, politics – be it national or local – has immense influence in the decision-making process. The prevalence of prescriptive models of planning and policy making indicates that tourism development is a rational process, whereas in reality, the political aspects of tourism are strongly tied to its economic consequences rather than the planning processes (Hall, 1994). For example, vital tasks of infrastructure upgrading and tourism promotions are partly reliant on government action which can be easily inhibited by political uncertainties. As the Asian Development Bank states, “a failure in implementation has been attributed to many factors including the lack of political will, heavy partisan politics, inadequate financial resources and graft and corruption” (ADB, 2005, p.vii).

Traditionally, the Philippine national government was the main instigator of tourism development and continues to play a central role today. Through the decentralization process, legislation like the LGC and the Tourism Act of 2009 enables LGUs to take on various tourism planning and development tasks, should they wish to pursue it. Despite the enabling legislations for LGUs to strategically engage in tourism development, LGUs are continually challenged by the realities of increased responsibilities, budget pressures, and the political circumstances in their locale. The results of the interviews demonstrate such constraints, especially as municipal tourism officers have assigned other positions. As such, LGUs’ ability to create and implement policies towards more sustainable development is certainly
Debatable (Rodolfo, 2003). As such, public efforts and budgets are primarily invested in tourism marketing and promotions with hopes of sustaining the tourism economics, as opposed to long-term visions.

The national and regional governments’ role in policy-making is central to the tourism industry, but also seen as problematic to LGUs. Considering the growing number of tourism policies at the national and regional levels, LGUs find themselves mandated to create compliant plans without the matching implementation capacity. However, recent legislation and plans are starting to recognize the need for increased assistance to LGUs. For instance, the Tourism Act of 2009 is explicit in the delineation of shared responsibilities between national and local governments, as a form of “shared governance”. Similarly, the draft CL-TAP recognizes the benefits of strategic regional planning through regional cooperation of public and private stakeholders. All of these new policy recommendations will take time to implement and the effects to take place.

Clearly, tourism governance is still reliant on the national government for assistance, despite the decentralized abilities of the LGCs. As most LGUs are already operating at maximum capacity in carrying out their essential functions (e.g., health, policing, social welfare, agricultural extension, supplementary education, etc.), tourism development can seem frivolous without national government funds or international assistance. At this point, it may seem logical that the LGUs come together to share their resources given the individual budgetary constraints and insufficient personnel capacity. If this is the path pursued, a political resolution from the Sanggunian would be required. Another option is for the private sector to lead the coordinative network process. Although less common, a case study by Robertson (2009) on RedeTuris in the Rio de Janeiro region has revealed that collaboration can be initiated by the private sector yet it is too soon to tell the effectiveness of this network.

The well-informed and trained staff at the PCTO have the opportunity to continue their leadership role and use the well-formed informal relationships among the tourism officer networks and private sector networks to prioritize tourism goals and objectives for the province. In doing so, providing clear ideas and direction demonstrates that the tourism industry can be an important economic contributor to incomes and the government.
4.4 Towards sustainable tourism?

Despite a wide array of literature on sustainable tourism, there remains a considerable disconnect between theory and application (Buckley, 2012). As Tosun (2001) pointed out, “it is not realistic to expect that a sector of the economy of a developing country will contribute to sustainable development of that country without a significant change in both the overall socio-economic structure and the public administration system” (p. 292). Trousdale (1999) adds that if effective governance is to heighten sustainable development considerations in the Philippines, historical experiences, market forces, socio-cultural influences, politics, and legislation must be taken into account.

Currently, sustainable development objectives still act as high policy objectives viewed from the economic perspective, as seen from the review of national and regional policies in Section Three. Credit must be given to the legislation and policies encouraging inclusionary processes such as community and stakeholder participation, as well as increased communication and coordination between the regional governments with the LGUs. Unfortunately, stronger policies around ecological health are still lacking. Despite these gaps in policy, striving for sustainable objectives is an incremental process, matched with realistic abilities as opposed to lofty, unattainable goals. Thus, the “small gains” of inclusionary processes and stakeholder coordination are a step in the right direction towards sustainability principles.

Another drawback in the policy-making realm is the time dimension. For example, the Medium Term Philippines Development Plan spans six years, which may be considered short-term in certain planning practices. With the time frame being tied to a presidential term, the longevity of the policies is not likely to last beyond the six years. Tourism planning practices follows a similar nature, as seen in the CL-TAP. Interestingly, the span of the plan is supposed to be from 2011 to 2016, yet the plan is still in draft form, which further shortens the amount of time for implementation.

At the LGU level, tourism planning is rare in Bulacan as few municipalities have tourism master plans. The nature of ad-hoc, project-by-project development is not uncommon in the Philippines. As a result, sustainable tourism carries a very narrow view of sustainability as it aims to sustain tourism businesses (McCool and Moisey, 2001). Rather, reframing tourism as a tool for social and economic development could be seen as a method of generating income and government revenue, and even as an incentive to
restore ecological health back to the Angat River; this may be the argument for the tourism industry to approach wary politicians.

Considering the breadth of steps that could be taken towards more sustainable forms of development in Bulacan, there is no standard or definitive model to be followed. Given the current tourism capacity at the LGU level, tourism considerations must be integrated with other planning documents with more political and legislated “teeth”, such as the Development and Physical Framework Plan. Tourism officers, together with expert and non-expert stakeholders, need to determine clear short-term and long-term objectives and find common problems that will be best addressed as a collective.
SECTION FIVE
RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Having discussed the findings in relation to collaborative network governance and Bulacan’s tourism assets, this section provides practical recommendations for the PCTO. It also suggests further actions the PCTO and stakeholders can take with respect to improvements to inter-stakeholder communications and tourism promotions. The following recommendations will be proposed as near-term and medium to long-term considerations to reflect current conditions and incremental gains in the long-term.

5.1 Near-Term Recommendations (within 2 to 3 years)

The near-term recommendations propose practical actions that the Province (PCTO), municipalities, and private sector stakeholders can take, given the current conditions. The Bulacan tourism sector is already filled with a variety of associations, and other types of networks that provide cooperative and coordinative action. As indicated by the results and ensuing discussion, it was clear that collaborative governance as defined by Ansell and Gash (2008) is not a practical mode of governance for Bulacan Province at this time. However, even without the PTC active, the formal arena for tourism stakeholder discussion and deliberation can still be held through other informal means. The Bulacan tourism stakeholders should take advantage of the friendly informal relationships with one another, and collectively come together to discuss issues and the future of tourism in Bulacan, following a coordinative network governance typology (Mandell and Keast, 2007).

**Recommendation 1: The Province (PCTO) should continue to play a leadership role**

The role of the provincial government is still essential in Bulacan’s tourism industry as the PCTO’s promotions attempts to represent all municipalities and private organizations. This leadership should be complemented with the engagement of tourism industry stakeholders, such as municipal tourism officers, key members of the PTC, university academics, and NGOs. Although the former formal network convenor is inactive, the PCTO has the ability to reach out to this wide group of stakeholders and propose that they convene to move forward in the near-term. For example, holding a special meeting session with stakeholders at one of BARO’s meetings for an informal roundtable for information sharing and discussing issues individual stakeholders currently face.
Another potential session could be focused on the up-and-coming LGU-initiated projects in the province. The PCTO could engage the municipalities that are currently actively pursuing tourism, such as Angat, San Rafael and Bustos, to present their coordinative process with each other and with relevant national departments (e.g. DENR, DOT, DILG).

Recommendation 2: PCTO should prioritize the top 5 to 10 priorities to support Bulacan’s tourism industry

As mentioned in Recommendation 1, there are options to convene members of Bulacan’s tourism industry either formally or informally. The author’s observations and analysis lead to the conclusion that the PCTO, along with various tourism stakeholders, need to discuss a clear set of goals and priorities that are generally mutually agreed upon. A set of priorities not only demonstrate organization and agreement among stakeholders, this list can be used to gain support from politicians to allocate a greater budget to meet such objectives. With the PCTO as the lead agency, this list of priorities could proceed in two ways:

1. **These priorities could be done as part of a short-term provincial tourism development plan.** By creating a tourism development plan, the priorities can be supported and integrated with other policies, encompassing a more holistic view. However, proceeding in such a plan will likely need a body like the PTC to be reactivated. A planning process will also require a greater amount of time and funds. (See Recommendation 3)

2. **These priorities could be completed independently without a tourism development plan.** This option would still allow stakeholders to convene and discuss more immediate priorities with less time and money. As a result, the priorities could be used for other means, including lobbying politicians or requesting funding and/or assistance from the DOT to complete future planning work.

While the list of priorities is ultimately the decision between the PCTO and tourism stakeholders, example priorities include the following:

- The proposed floating restaurant in Pulilan is a unique business idea that could serve locals and tourists. As the restaurant will be situated on the Angat River banks, coordinated actions will be required to create a pleasant customer experience. For instance, unpleasant odours coming
from the River and other uses upstream would detract from the overall dining experience. The restaurant could mitigate these smells on site. However, in coordination with upstream uses, the River could be rehabilitated to provide more pleasant surroundings not only for the restaurant, but also for local residents. At the same time, the promotion of this floating restaurant could be supported by members of BARO and BATA as a unique dining experience for their customers.

- The Biak Na Bato National Park is a popular natural destination with rich historical significance and political meaning. One of the concerns brought up by the municipality of San Miguel is that there aren’t enough accommodations near the National Park and that San Miguel does not receive adequate financial benefits from the Park as it is managed by the national Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). Visitors are either day-trippers or stay at a resort elsewhere. Another concern for San Miguel is the congestion on the main road leading to San Miguel. These issues clearly cannot be resolved by San Miguel alone. Together with the PPDO, PCTO, and BARO, San Miguel should request a collaborative project with the national DENR and the DOT to ameliorate these concerns and elevate the significance of Biak Na Bato National Park.

**Recommendation 3: Create a tourism development plan which considers the most recent Provincial Physical Development Framework.**

From the 5 to 10 priorities in Recommendation 2, the PCTO’s role, as clearly enabled in the Local Government Code, should extend beyond promotional and marketing strategies and transition to tourism planning and its integration with land use. This purpose of the tourism development plan, as defined in the Tourism Act of 2009, is “a strategic framework that provides for the orderly and rational development of the tourism sector within a given area, providing policy and approaches to develop, promote and integrate various programs and projects”. At this time, the PCTO and the tourism stakeholders should brainstorm attainable sustainability principles to include in the tourism development plan with assistance from tourism professors from the Bulacan State University or other institutions. Reiterating McCool and Moisey (2001), framing tourism as a tool to achieve other broader economic, social, and environmental objectives is a view that should be considered.

The list of priorities shall be addressed through these policies and strategic actions in the plan. Depending on the priorities, the Plan shall also designate implementing roles as partnerships with
tourism stakeholders. Given the larger scope of work, the PCTO may need some additional staffing capacity or expertise to carry out this action. One possibility is to pursue additional funding and assistance from the DOT, which will be discussed in Recommendations 5 and 6.

Additionally, this plan should strategically consider the most recent Provincial Physical Development Framework, while being consistent with the Central Luzon Tourism Action Plan once it is approved. In order to move forward with this Plan, the initial support and final approval of the Sanggunian Tourism Committee would be needed. The broad stakeholder discussions would be best discussed through a formal network like the PTC. For the time being, this recommendation may have to wait for an opportune time before it is set in motion.

**Recommendation 4: The PCTO should engage in a clearly defined and focused promotional and marketing strategy with a focus on Cultural/Heritage and Nature-Based Tourism.**

Ideally, this action would be part of the tourism development plan in Recommendation 3. Should the political circumstances or funding be unfavourable to carry out the plan, the PCTO can still carry out this recommendation independent of the tourism development plan as they have the capacity to complete more focused promotional work. One of the main requests from the PCTO was for this author to provide some recommendations to improve Bulacan’s key tourism agency, which also needs to create clearer and interactive tourism information online, paid with group resources from municipalities and industry. Actions include:

- Re-design the entire Bulacan Tourism website
- Provide clearer thematic presentation of cultural, historical, and natural destinations
  - With the new projects underway in Angat, San Rafael, and Bustos, ensure that the Eco-Park project is included
- Feature a different tourism destination or business establishment every month
- Provide a series of larger maps on the website, clearly labeled with tourism destinations, and key transportation stops around the province
- Provide differentiation of accommodations by price range, amenities, and level of accreditation (i.e. DOT-accredited or provincial accreditation)
- Use higher-resolution promotional photos
- Provide relevant destination information (websites, hours of operation, admission fees)
• Promote tourism incentives (like print-out coupons from participating businesses)
• Provide updated calendar of events listing all festivals, celebrations, and special events happening around the Province

**Recommendation 5: the PCTO should request assistance with data and market research from universities and the DOT**

Quality data and market research is often lacking at the LGU-level. Most collected data are based on estimates and often lacking in accuracy. With the top 5 to 10 priorities in mind, the PCTO should consider partnering with local universities to provide internship placements focused on improving the quality of data and market research. This would provide practical experiences for students in tourism-related programs from the local universities such as Bulacan State University, Baliwag University, and La Consolacion University.

Assistance in data and market research should also be sought from the DOT’s regional office as the Tourism Act of 2009 defines their role in researching and gathering data on local tourism trends and other relevant tourism information (Subchapter II-A, s. 17 (c)). The PCTO should take the initiative in approaching the Central Luzon Regional Tourism Office to establish a working relationship. While establishing a set of telling indicators is important, providing brief seminars on maintaining a business database to tourism enterprises in Bulacan can also improve the quality of data in the long run.

**Recommendation 6: The PCTO should request funds from the DOT to assist with the preparation of tourism development plans**

Following the data and market research, provisions in the Tourism Act of 2009 also state that the DOT may provide financial and technical assistance, training, and other capacity-building measures to LGUs in recognition of the capacity gap between the national and local governments (Rule VIII, Chapter 1, s. 118 (b)). The DOT shall also develop support and training programs to enhance the capability of LGUs to monitor and administer tourism planning and activities as well as effective enforcement of tourism laws, rules and regulations. Funding of these programs will be shared equitably between the DOT and the LGUs (Chapter 2, Subchapter II-E, s. 41).
Therefore, a list of priorities would be helpful to detail out the extent of assistance the PCTO may need from the DOT. In the author’s view, priority should be given to skills development, statistical data collection, and to the funding of tourism development planning processes.

**Recommendation 7: The PCTO should engage non-expert stakeholders**

While the PCTO and tourism stakeholders have a good grasp of their tourism products and market, the overall engagement of non-expert stakeholders could add value and new ideas to the tourism product. The importance of engaging non-expert stakeholders in sustainable tourism is well documented. In this case however, reaching out to members of the community such as students from Bulacan State University could generate a targeted, yet broad range of feedback. By holding an *ideas competition*, the incentive of prizes could generate greater participation.

During the interviews, a tourism officer also noted that a priest in the community had certain ideas of tourism development and promotion as well. Involving community leaders, such as key individuals from the Catholic Church and local NGOs in future outreach programs and/or tourism networks may be a worthwhile consideration.

**5.2 Medium to Long Term Considerations (4 to 10 years)**

These medium to long term considerations are aimed at the potential of tourism planning and development in Bulacan Province. This time period can also be used to implement actions in the tourism development plan or to implement the list of priorities done independently without a planning process. As the goal of this project is to explore governance options for sustainable tourism, the medium to long term time frame is likely to be more appropriate for some of the following recommendations to be realized.

**Recommendation 8: The PCTO should request funds from the DOT to assist with the implementation and monitoring of tourism development plans**

A similar request to the DOT was recommended in Recommendation 6 for funding in the *planning* of the tourism development plan, which may be completed in the near-term. However, one of the major shortcomings of planning in the Philippines, as noted by many interview respondents, is the inability to implement and monitor these plans. Therefore, if the funds are not available at the provincial level, or if
funds cannot be leveraged among network members, the PCTO should request additional funds from the DOT to assist with the implementation and monitoring of these plans.

It is equally important, that future planning (i.e. a new Physical Development Framework or an Economic Development Plan) which occurs at the provincial and municipal levels, should integrate sustainable tourism considerations to create synergy between policies.

**Recommendation 9: Fully utilize Local Government Code provisions**

Two decades of the Local Government Code have bestowed a degree of autonomy to LGUs, given the limitations provided in the Code and other applicable laws. This recommendation urges the PCTO and the Sanggunian Tourism Committee to explore the powers in the LGC beneficial for the tourism industry. So far, the PCTO has used regulatory powers in the recent application of the Bulacan Tourism Code. However, there are other sections within the LGC which can facilitate collaboration between the province, local governments, private stakeholders, and NGOs. For instance, the corporate powers allow LGUs to enter into contracts and public-private partnerships. Additionally, Section 35 enables LGUs to enter into joint ventures and cooperative arrangements with People’s Organizations and NGOs to deliver basic services, engage in capacity building, and the like. These abilities encompass a great deal of possibilities when it comes to the development of sustainable tourism and associated projects.

**Recommendation 10: Develop the potential for Tourism Governance to become more collaborative**

There is a likelihood that the PTC will be reconvened again the medium to long term. When that time comes, there should be efforts made to adjust the institutional design of the network to encourage participation, process, and transparency. Additionally, the commitment to process and strong leadership need to be demonstrated by the politicians involved, as the political role may have lost a degree of trust from network members. Incentives and ownership of the collaborative process need to be made clear to all public and private stakeholders.

It is recommended that future research evaluate the effectiveness of Provincial Tourism Councils and the near-term tourism project outcomes in different Regions of the Philippines. Governance will play a major role in tourism development in the Philippines, especially as destinations around the country prepare to meet the President’s ambitious goal of 10 million international visitors by 2016.
5.3 Future Research and Projects

This project is a starting point of examining collaborative network governance in its application to sustainable tourism. Although the array of literature points out the benefits of network governance in its contribution to sustainable tourism, several factors at the time of research inhibited further analysis on the subject.

From the qualitative data gathered, the influence of politics in tourism planning and governance is an issue beyond the theoretical scope of this professional project. Future theses on the topic of tourism governance, particularly in the developing world, must take into account historical experiences, market forces, socio-cultural influences, politics, and legislation (Trousdale, 1999). Thus, the potential to further examine the influences of politics on tourism development in the Philippines from the national to local scale could significantly contribute to understanding governance and the decision-making process. Further to the study of governance, Recommendation 10 points to a comparative study of Provincial Tourism Councils around the Philippines to gauge not only the collaborative process, but also the influence of politics and other factors on sustainable tourism development.

Lastly, research around the “alternative” forms of tourism, specifically cultural tourism and eco-tourism, is especially relevant to the Philippine tourism industry. As the flourishing “sun, sand, and sea” forms of tourism plateaus in certain areas like Boracay, alternative forms of tourism will expand throughout the country. The Filipino people take pride in their unique culture, history, and natural landscapes. By developing a strong educational component in the tourism industry may incentive the protection of heritage building and natural areas.

5.4 Conclusion

This project has explored and discussed the potentials and limitations of tourism governance options in Bulacan Province. Clearly, the described limitations of politics, funding, and decentralization are complex and deeply-rooted problems that will take time for both the nation and the LGUs to adjust to and overcome. Despite some of the unexpected outcomes from the interviews (i.e. the inactive Provincial Tourism Council), the interviewed tourism stakeholders show professionalism and dedication to the industry they serve. The well-developed relationships among these members should be regarded as a
positive finding, as this indicates a healthy level of trust and commitment to network governance processes.

Further, the leadership shown by the Provincial Cultural and Tourism Office also demonstrates that they have the ability to encourage and activate tourism stakeholders to take pragmatic steps within the political context. Lastly, the future of cultural and nature-based tourism in Bulacan Province lies in an integrated planning approach if sustainable tourism is to be a primary consideration in tourism governance.
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