

Tourism policy implementation in the Philippines, 1973-2009

Edieser De La Santa – Graduated 2010

Abstract

This thesis examines the substance and mechanisms of tourism policy implementation in the Philippines in the last 30 years or so (1972-2009). To meet this objective, the research undertook an ecotourism case study and pursued the following steps. First is a description and analysis of what policy implementation comprised in terms of policies and programmes. Second is an examination of how the implementation process has taken place through a focus on the interaction of key actors, their strategies and use of resources, as well as their perceptions and values. Third is an attempt at explaining why the implementation process has taken place the way it did by deducing key longer-term historical factors as well as contextual conditions from the analysis and exploring their inter-relationship.

Based on a review of the policy implementation literature, the thesis employed the advocacy coalition framework and policy networks approach in analysing the case of the Philippines. It allowed the researcher to use multiple levels of abstraction, identify key causal processes that might explain policy implementation, capture the dynamics of social interactions formed among policy actors and target participants, as well as take cognizance of the context within which tourism policies are implemented. In addition, the thesis utilized theories of the state such as clientelism to assist interpretation and explanation.

Field research was undertaken in the Philippines from January to July 2008 in two research sites: Manila and Pamilacan Island, Bohol Province. Data collected consisted of archival records, interviews, observations, and visual materials. Content analysis and network analysis were the principal methods of data analysis.

Analysis of findings suggests key roles for external and internal forces in explaining tourism policy implementation. External factors found salient were changing socio-economic conditions, social-cultural values, basic constitutional structure, and systemic governing coalitions and control of institutions. Internal forces found influential were ideas and policy learning, and policy networks.

Disaggregating these variables and analysing their dynamics lead to the central argument that subject to the constraints imposed by the wider environment and available resources, tourism policy implementation is determined ultimately by traditional power relationships, even if learning, as intermediated by policy networks and micro-implementation processes, drives the policy process forward. This applies most particularly at the local level where elite families dominate the political system and where patron-client relations are strongest.

In terms of contribution to knowledge, the thesis adds on three fronts. First, it increases the meagre supply of in-depth tourism policy studies. Second, by using the advocacy coalition framework and policy networks, it demonstrates the methodological utility of doing research that uses multiple levels of analysis and methods in order to better understand the policy process. Third, it illuminates some dark corners of policymaking. Within the Philippine context, it offers an integrated description,

explanation and theory of the tourism policy process in the last 30 years or so. It highlights the political nature of implementation and the futility of assuming a Weberian model of public administration in a patrimonial state with a highly personalistic political system.

Broadly, the thesis identifies key categories that might be useful in studies of tourism policy implementation in other contexts, particularly democratizing island states. While proposing a transmission process through which these variables inter-relate, it calls for greater attention than currently conceived to policy-oriented learning as a driver of change, particularly if policy implementation efforts are more concerned with acceptance of uncertainty and collaboration than power plays among interest groups.

Finally, the thesis suggests ways to improve the use of policy process models in geographical contexts characterized by political instability. Focusing on the advocacy coalition framework, it calls for a re-assessment of some aspects that in the study were found to be at odds with the importance conveyed in the framework, a deeper consideration of the political system, and a relaxation of some rigid analytic dimensions.