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Working Paper

Green and Gold: Promoting Eco-Adventure and Cultural Tourism for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth

PIDS Discussion Paper Series, No. 2015-33

Provided in Cooperation with:

Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), Philippines

Suggested Citation: Picazo, Oscar F. (2015) : Green and Gold: Promoting Eco-Adventure and Cultural Tourism for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth, PIDS Discussion Paper Series, No. 2015-33

This Version is available at:

<http://hdl.handle.net/10419/127047>

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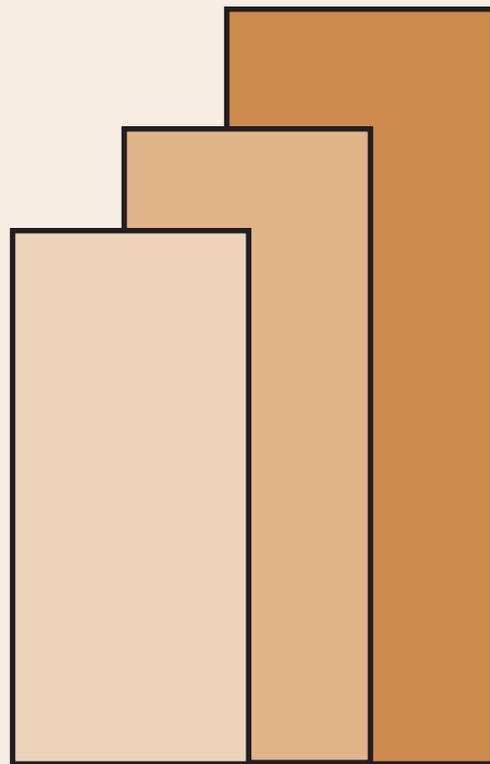
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DISCUSSION PAPER SERIES NO. 2015-33

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June 2015

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Green and Gold: Promoting Eco-Adventure and Cultural Tourism for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth¹

Oscar F. Picazo



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¹ The paper was initially intended to be part of the Research Project APEC 2015 but upon comments and suggestion by Committee on Host Economy Priorities (CHEP), the focus of the study was changed and the policy paper was replaced by People-to-People Tourism in APEC (PIDS DP 2015-16). This forms part of the PASCN/PIDS research output.

Green and Gold: Promoting Eco-Adventure and Cultural Tourism for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth

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Abstract

This paper briefly reviews the literature on the emerging concept of eco-adventure and cultural tourism, dubbed “green and gold tourism” respectively. It provides the rationale for conducting such a study in the Philippines (why the concern for inclusivity and environmental sustainability in tourism). It then establishes the feasible scope of such a study and lists illustrative activities of inclusive and sustainable green and gold tourism. It also identifies concerns and issues about green and gold tourism in APEC countries and in the Philippines. Finally, it classifies emerging good practices in this area, including volunteer travel, promotion of home stays, community organized and owned tourism activities, establishing non-mainstream tourist routes and destinations, and tourists’ involvement in cultural preservation and eco-rehabilitation.

Key words: eco-adventure tourism, cultural tourism, green tourism, gold tourism, inclusive tourism, sustainable tourism, non-traditional tourism

² Research assistance was provided by Gilbert Valerie T. Ulep, Ida Pantig, Danica Ortiz, Melanie Aldeon, and Nina de la Cruz.

I. Background

The Philippines will host the annual Asia Pacific Economic Community (APEC) Summit in 2015. In support of this meeting, the APEC National Organizing Committee on Host Economic Priorities (CHEP) has formulated “Research Project APEC 2015” to generate ideas and recommendations for the meeting, focusing on the three objectives of food security and the blue economy, employment generation and stability, and sustainability and resilience. Tourism has been identified as one cross-cutting priority topic, straddling the objectives of employment generation (inclusivity) and sustainability.

Tourism has evolved along two major flanks: (a) mass or mainstream tourism which is conventional, standard, and large-scale tourism, and (b) alternative tourism which includes non-traditional activities such as cultural/educational tourism, ecotourism and adventure tourism, and agro-tourism (Nguyen, 2012). Sometimes embedded within alternative tourism (especially eco- and adventure tourism) is volunteer tourism in which tourists share their time, talent, and other resources to do a range of environmental or development-oriented work.

This policy research proposal focuses on alternative tourism, specifically its two segments of eco-adventure tourism (which is here dubbed “green”) and cultural tourism (which is dubbed “gold”), and how to make these two segments more inclusive or pro-poor and participatory, and more environmentally sustainable.

The aim of this policy research study is to provide appropriate recommendations on how to make eco- and adventure tourism as well as cultural tourism more inclusive and sustainable among APEC countries. The objectives are: (a) to collect, document, and analyze emerging best practices in APEC countries, focusing on the Philippines and the ASEAN region; (c) to identify key issues with respect to the emerging best practices; and (d) to cull lessons learned from these emerging best practices.

II. Rationale for the Study

Why green tourism? – Green tourism is a moniker for a wide range of related concepts including ecotourism, nature tourism, adventure travel, environmental tourism new tourism, sustainable tourism and others (Goelder and Ritchie, 2003). The International Ecotourism society defines ecotourism as “purposeful travel to natural areas to understand the culture and natural history of the environment, taking care not to alter the integrity of the ecosystem while producing economic opportunities that make the conservation of natural resources beneficial to local people,” (IES, n.d.). Green tourism’s benefits and importance are that it provides jobs and income for local people; makes possible funds for improving protected or natural areas to attract more ecotourists in

the future; provides environmental education for visitors; and encourages heritage and environmental preservation and enhancement, including the creation of new and enlarged national and state parks, forest preserves, biosphere reserves, recreation areas, beaches, marine and underwater trails, and similar attractions (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2003).

Why gold tourism? – According to Goelder and Ritchie (2003), festivals and events are among the fastest-growing segments of tourism in the world. These include fairs, festivals, markets, parades, celebrations, and anniversaries. Festivals and events appeal to a very broad audience; they also spread tourism geographically and seasonally and have, therefore, a large potential inclusive impact. Feasts and special events give communities a sense of pride and ownership, enhancing social capital and therefore inclusiveness, even as they also enhance the economic well-being of locals from the revenues that such tourism generates. Similarly, monuments and churches, temples, mosques and other physical marks of culture have always been a major attraction for tourists. While the older generation of tourists were attracted to European cradles of civilization, the younger generations are seeking out cultural destinations in the Orient and in South America. Thus, there is a large potential for Asian and Latin APEC countries to tap into this emerging segment of the global tourism market.

Why the concern for inclusivity? – In the past, the Philippines and other developing APEC countries have relied largely on mainstream tourism. Mainstream tourism, however, tends to be capital-intensive and requires a large scale and has, thus, tended to be less inclusive (less pro-poor) than alternative tourism. In response to this less-inclusive propensity of the mainstream tourism industry, pro-poor tourism strategies have been developed and implemented in an increasing number of settings. Pro-poor tourism (PPT) is tourism that generates net benefits for the poor; it is not a specific product or sector of tourism but an overall approach (Ashley, Goodwin, and Roe, 2001). “Rather than aiming to expand the size of the sector, PPT strategies aim to unlock opportunities for economic gain, other livelihood benefits, or engagement in decision-making for the poor.” Inclusive tourism therefore supports the Philippine Medium-Term Development’s thrust of overall inclusive growth.

Ashley, Goodwin, and Roe (2001) cite six case studies where pro-poor tourism has made a dent in the lives of poor people in South Africa, Namibia, Uganda, Ecuador, St. Lucia, and Nepal. All the examples are non-APEC, and this study will endeavour to find similar cases in APEC countries.

Why the concern for environmental sustainability? – Environmental sustainability is an important consideration in tourism activities. Conservation and preservation of the natural environment ensures that it will be a continuing source of tourism revenues in the years to come. Over-exploitation and excessive tourist densities per square area or per unit of time (especially in peak seasons) can ruin a destination and reduce its usefulness. Although ecotourism is limited in its market share of total tourism at present, it is expected to increase, and careful management of the

ecosystems that are opened to tourists is needed. The World Travel and Tourism Council has expressed particular concern with respect to resource depletion and pollution of land resources that may arise from mass tourism. Specifically, loss of landscape and wildlife could cause a decrease in customer satisfaction with tourism products and hence lower people's propensity to travel to some destinations (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2003). In response for a worldwide call for more sustainable tourism, the World Tourism Organization has developed core indicators that can be used at various levels to assess the sustainability of tourism activities (Table 1).

Table 1. Core Indicators of Sustainable Tourism

Indicators	Specific Measures
Site protection	Category of site protection according to IUCN ³ index
Stress	Tourist numbers visiting site (per annum/peak month)
Use intensity	Intensity of use in peak period (persons/hectare)
Social impact	Ratio of tourists to locals (peak period and over time)
Development control	Existence of environmental review procedure or formal controls over development of site and use of densities
Waste management	Percentage of sewage from site receiving treatment (additional indicators may include structural capacity on-site, such as water supply)
Planning process	Existence of organized regional plan for tourist destination region (including tourism component)
Critical ecosystems	Number of rare/endangered species
Consumer satisfaction	Level of satisfaction by visitors (questionnaire-based)
Local satisfaction	Level of satisfaction by locals (questionnaire-based)
Tourism contribution to local economy	Proportion of total economic activity generated by tourists only
Composite Indices	Specific Measures
Carrying capacity	Composite early warning measure of key factors affecting the ability of the site to support different levels of tourism
Site stress	Composite measure of levels of impact on the site (its natural and cultural attributes due to tourism and other sector cumulative stresses)

³ International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources

Attractivity	Qualitative measure of those site attributes that make it attractive to tourism and can change over time
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Source: World Tourism Organization, cited by Goldner and Ritchie, 2003

III. Scope and Illustrative Activities of Inclusive and Sustainable Green and Gold Tourism

Green tourism includes ecotourism, adventure tourism, agro-tourism, safaris and similar trips.

(a) Ecotourism is travel involving mountain/volcano climbing and trekking, camping, rainforest trekking and canopy tours, zipline riding, mangrove tours, garden tours, bird watching, animal encounters (whale, whale-shark, and dolphin watching), firefly tours, and butterfly farm visits.

(b) Adventure tourism is travel involving rainforest trekking, mountain climbing, camping, hang-gliding, bungee jumping, white-water rafting, desert sand boarding, scuba diving, snorkelling, and helicopter rides over large waterfalls/canyons and other scenic places.

(c) Agro-tourism covers travel to farms, ranches, estates, plantations, and homesteads and includes such examples as growing, harvesting, and processing of crops and produce, e.g., coffee farming, tea estates, and pick-your-own fruit harvesting.

(d) Safari tourism originated in Africa but has also been adopted by APEC countries. This involves travel to see wild animals in their natural habitat, e.g., polar bears in Alaska, USA and Douglas, Canada; Sumatran tigers and komodo dragons in Indonesia, orang-utans in Borneo, giraffes and other wild animals in Calautit, Palawan, and the like.

Gold (cultural) tourism includes ethnic tourism, cultural tourism proper, historical tourism, pilgrimage, and tourism to watch or participate in festivals and events.

(a) Ethnic tourism is travel for the purpose of observing the cultural expressions and lifestyles of truly exotic people. Typical destination activities would include visiting native homes, attending dances and ceremonies, and possibly participating in religious rituals (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2003). Popular examples are the tours revolving around Cusco, Peru and Lake Titicaca to experience the life of the descendants of the Incas; the Inuit tours in Canada; and tourism promoting celebrations of First Nations in the United States. The hill tribes in Southeast Asia (e.g., Hmongs in Cambodia, Thailand and Burma) and the Balinese in Indonesia also come to mind. Brazil and South Africa have also pioneered

tourism to disadvantaged areas (*favelas* in Rio de Janeiro, District 6 and the Flatlands in Cape Town) where households can show their living quarters.

(b) Cultural tourism proper is travel to experience and, in some cases, participate in a vanishing lifestyle, and to see physical artifacts of such way of life. The picturesque setting or local color in the destination area is the main attraction. Destination activities typically include meals in rustic inns, costume festivals, folk dance performances, and arts and crafts demonstrations in old-style fashion (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2003).

(c) Historical tourism is tour that stresses the glories of a country's past, usually seen in its museums, forts, palaces, gates, and cathedrals. Favored destinations under this type of tourism are guided tours of monuments, visits to churches or mosques or temples, and sound-and-light performances that encapsulate the lifestyle of important events of a bygone era (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2003). The prominent examples are travels to the Great Wall of China; Borubodur and Prambanan in Jogjakarta, Indonesia; Angkor Wat in Cambodia, Macchu Picchu in Peru, and Chichen Itza and other Mayan architecture in Central America.

(d) Pilgrimage tourism is travel for a religious purpose. Christian pilgrimage is well established in Europe (e.g., Fatima in Portugal, Lourdes in France); Hindu religious sites are well visited in South Asia; and the hajj among Muslims take them to Mecca. However, similar pilgrimage travel is not as well established in APEC countries, although it has emerged in some countries.

(e) Festivals and events tourism involves travel to a specific location to witness or participate in a specific activity held during a particular date. Examples are the Ati-atihan in Antique; Sinulog in Cebu; Inti Raymi (summer solstice) in Cusco, Peru and other pre-Columbian sites; SunFest in Florida; the National Western Stock Show, in Denver, Colorado, every January; the Day of the Dead in Mexico; and Long Krathong in Thailand.

IV. Concerns and Issues About Green and Gold Tourism in APEC, Focusing on the Philippines

This part of the study will examine the key issues in formulating, promoting and implementing green and gold tourism initiatives in the Philippines (AHRRC, 2011).

1. What are the stakeholders' main concerns in eco-adventure and cultural tourism?
2. What is the level of knowledge of stakeholders on inclusivity and environmental sustainability issues? What is their source of information about these issues?
3. Do stakeholders have inclusivity and environmental sustainability goals, strategies, policies or plans? Provide specific examples on these. What are the main factors driving the inclusion of

- these considerations? How are they communicated to employees, tourists, or community members?
4. If not, what are the biggest barriers in developing appropriate strategies and practices in pursuit of inclusive and environmentally sustainable eco-adventure tourism and cultural tourism?
 5. What are the most common and effective inclusivity and environmental sustainability strategies or activities that stakeholders actually conduct or get involved in? What have stakeholders heard about inclusivity and sustainability that they want to try or adopt, if they had the means to do so?
 6. What changes would stakeholders want from the tourism status quo, if they had their way?

Next steps will involve the following: (a) Conduct of a literature review on the state of green and gold tourism in the Philippines and, if feasible, in the ASEAN region. (b) Conduct interviews with a small sample of stakeholders, including relevant community representatives, on the issues and concerns using a prepared interview schedule patterned after the Arizona Tourism Study (AHRRC, 2011). (c) Draft the key findings of the interviews.

V. Emerging Good Practices in Inclusivity and Sustainability in Green and Gold Tourism in APEC

This section of the study involves identifying and documenting a sample of emerging good practices in inclusivity and environmental sustainability of green and gold tourism initiatives in the Philippines and in the ASEAN region. This will be done through an extensive Internet search for documented practices. A preliminary literature review has already yielded the following emerging good practices: volunteer travel, promotion of home stays and related lodging possibilities, community owned and organized green and gold tourism activities, establishing non-mainstream or “New Frontier” tourism routes and destinations, and tourists’ involvement in cultural preservation and rehabilitation. Other good practices will be identified in the course of this study.

The review of Ashley, Goodwin, and Roe (2001) highlighted the often-multilevel and sometimes multisectoral interventions needed to achieve pro-poor tourism. This study will also try to locate case-studies of that nature. However, it will also collect specific interventions that could be of practical use in crafting relevant interventions.

Practice 1: Volunteer Travel – This practice includes service-oriented vacation, humanitarian vacation, and “gap year” travel among the young in developed countries.

The review will cover the following:

- Indicators and concrete examples of this practice (3-5 preferably from the Philippines or if not, from ASEAN)
- Key issues with respect to this practice
- Lessons learned from this practice

Practice 2: Promotion of Home Stays – This practice provides opportunities for local residents to use existing assets (their homes) as lodging places and thereby earn additional revenues and experience a sense of pride. This practice is not yet well-established in the Philippines and other ASEAN countries, but is expected to become more popular in the future.

The review will cover the following:

- Indicators and concrete examples of this practice (3-5 preferably from the Philippines or if not, from ASEAN)
- Key issues with respect to this practice
- Lessons learned from this practice

Practice 3: Community Organized and Owned Tourism Activities – This practice is getting established in the Philippines, thanks mainly to the efforts of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. They include firefly tours in Donsol, Sorsogon; mangrove tours in Guiuan, Eastern Samar and Northern Leyte; whale-shark watching in Donsol and Oslob, Cebu; dolphin watching; and others. Similar efforts are also emerging in other ASEAN and developing APEC countries.

The review will cover the following:

- Indicators and concrete examples of this practice (3-5 preferably from the Philippines or if not, from ASEAN)
- Key issues with respect to this practice
- Lessons learned from this practice

Practice 4: Establishing Non-Mainstream or “New Frontier” Tourist Routes and Destinations – Boracay is the Philippines’ top tourist draw and because of this, it is showing signs of over-development. Yet there are many other national tourist attractions in the country, and there are even attractions that are known only to local residents in an area. This practice focuses on finding, arranging, and marketing “off-the-beaten-track” routes and destinations, e.g., firefly tours; butterfly raising and tours; unexplored waterfalls and other sites known only to local residents; cuisine/ethnic food tours; and the like.

The review will cover the following:

- Indicators and concrete examples of this practice (3-5 from the Philippines or if not, from ASEAN)
- Key issues with respect to this practice
- Lessons learned from this practice

Practice 5: Tourists' Involvement in Cultural Preservation and Eco-Rehabilitation – This tourism practice focuses on endangered cultural sites (e.g., those in the endangered monuments' list) and cultural or ecotourism sites that have been destroyed by natural or man-made disasters, including vandalism. This practice is particularly relevant and timely in view of the recent destruction of key cultural treasures as a result of the 7.2 earthquake in Bohol and Cebu, and the devastation caused by supertyphoon Yolanda especially in Leyte and Samar; Malapascua Island, Daang Bantayan, and Bantayan Island (all in Cebu), Capiz, Northern Antique, and Coron Island in Palawan.

The review will cover the following:

- Indicators and concrete examples of this practice (3-5 examples from the Philippines or if not, from ASEAN)
- Key issues with respect to this practice
- Lessons learned from this practice

VI. Proposed Activities of National Focus and Regional Outlook for Ecotourism and Cultural Tourism

This stage of the study will involve formulating proposed activities of national focus and regional outlook for inclusive and sustainable green and gold tourism. Preference will be given to already-existing initiatives or activities. Although tourism is a place-specific economic activity and therefore difficult to convert into a regional initiative, the principles and practices of inclusiveness and environmental sustainability are expected to be very similar across countries, and certainly among emerging tropical countries. Hence, whatever emerging good practices found in the Philippines and in ASEAN should be reasonably applicable in other developing APEC countries as well, with the requisite customization.

Illustrative activities at the collective level include: (a) Official identification and listing of cultural heritage sites, historical buildings, and fragile ecosystems; (b) Funding and technical-assistance modalities; (c) "Adoption" by respected institutions of cultural and environmental sites for rescue and preservation; (d) Formulation of Codes of Conduct for players within the industry, e.g., ASTA's Ten Commandments of Ecotourism; APEC/PATA's code of environmentally sustainable tourism; and support for the practice and enforcement of such codes; (e) Formulation of Codes of Ethics and Practices for Tourists, e.g., the one by the Canadian tourism industry; National Audubon

Society's Travel Ethics for Environmentally Responsible Travel (1989); Save Our Planet's Guidelines for Low Impact Vacations (1990); and the Center for Responsible Tourism's Tourist Code of Ethics; and support for the practice and enforcement of such codes; (f) Formulation and enforcement of industry regulatory standards, e.g., conduct of environmental assessment, and environmental audits of practices; (g) Compliance with international conventions and national, state, and local laws; (h) Community approaches and processes, and provision of relevant capacity-building; (i) Formulation of appropriate indicators for M&E and conduct of impact evaluation; and (j) Information, education, and communication (IEC) campaigns for individual tourists' responsibilities.

Proposed activity 1

- Brief description of the activity
- Key stakeholders to be involved
- Specific roles and responsibilities of stakeholders

Proposed activity 2

- Brief description of the activity
- Key stakeholders to be involved
- Specific roles and responsibilities of stakeholders

Proposed activity 3

- Brief description of the activity
- Key stakeholders to be involved
- Specific roles and responsibilities of stakeholders

Proposed activity 4

- Brief description of the activity
- Key stakeholders to be involved
- Specific roles and responsibilities of stakeholders

Proposed activity 5

- Brief description of the activity
- Key stakeholders to be involved
- Specific roles and responsibilities of stakeholders

VII. Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

This section of the study will cull the major conclusions and policy recommendations. Focus will be made on actionable recommendations with significant impact on inclusiveness and sustainability.

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