

Jeepney Phase(In): The Unaccountable Innovation and Ethical Dilemma of the PUJ Modernization Program

Ms. Reiou Regie Manuel

National College of Public Administration and Governance, University of the Philippines
rmanuel1@up.edu.ph

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ABSTRACT

Public innovation refers to the implementation of transformative ideas designed to enhance the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of service delivery. In the Philippine transportation sector, the Public Utility Jeepney (PUJ) Modernization Program represents such an innovation, aiming to provide environmentally sustainable transportation solutions and dignified livelihoods to its target beneficiaries while alleviating urban congestion nationwide. However, like many public innovations, the PUJ Modernization Program has generated unintended perverse effects that negatively impact both direct and indirect stakeholders. These outcomes raise critical questions regarding the extent to which stakeholders' values were adequately considered during implementation and whether program administrators upheld appropriate ethical standards and accountability measures. This study employed Alfiller's Political-Administrative Accountability Continuum and Spicer's Value Pluralism as theoretical frameworks to examine government practices. Through document and content analysis of secondary data—including academic literature, laws and policies, news reports, press releases, and public statements—this research investigated how the Philippine government practiced ethics and accountability in implementing the PUJ Modernization Program. The findings reveal significant governance failures. Despite being answerable to the public, lawmakers, implementing agencies, and sectoral representatives failed to reconcile diverse stakeholder values or promote meaningful participatory governance. Consequently, jeepney drivers and operators—the program's most directly affected groups—experienced multiple adverse effects: economic exclusion, information asymmetry, value conflicts, ambiguous government planning, misallocation of public funds, displacement of local industries, erosion of cultural identity, and inadequate democratic oversight.

INTRODUCTION

Public Innovation and its Perverse Effects

Dealing with wicked problems in the public sector is challenging, as they defy conventional solution models (Chen et al., 2020). As a result, public innovation has emerged as a potential solution (Agger et al., 2015). Over time, it has become a key driver of transformation in the public sector, facilitating process improvements, policy development, stakeholder engagement, and institutional reforms (Bason, 2010; Gieske et al., 2019; De Vries et al., 2016). However, Jordan (2014) warns that despite their good intentions, public innovations can lead to unintended negative consequences through their spillover effects.

The concept of perverse effects is central to understanding these unintended outcomes. In this study, perverse effects are defined as situations where the gains of one sector come at the expense of another (Meijer and Thaens, 2021). These effects typically manifest as economic inefficiencies, power imbalances, resource wastage, and negative impacts on stakeholders. It is, therefore, essential to explore the “dark

side” of public innovation, where such unintended outcomes arise from the failure to balance competing stakeholder interests and from inadequate ethical governance.

The Jeepney Modernization Program

Dubbed the “King of the Roads,” jeepneys dominate public transportation in the Philippines due to their affordability and large seating capacity of 12 to 16 passengers (Güss and Tuason, 2008). They hold deep cultural significance, having been repurposed from U.S. military jeeps left after World War II (Meñez, 1998). Spare vehicle parts were creatively converted into colorful, metal-enhanced passenger vehicles for public transport (Andalecio et al., 2020), and these repurposed vehicles were sold as new, becoming the basis for today’s traditional jeepneys (Coz et al., 2015).

Despite their historical and cultural importance, traditional Philippine jeepneys are increasingly viewed as outdated, often failing to meet modern standards for maintenance, safety, and environmental regulations (Andalecio et al., 2020). Their diesel engines, many of which are surplus or second-hand, violate the Philippine Clean Air Act of 1999, posing significant environmental concerns (Regidor et al., 2009).

In response to these challenges, the Philippine government, through the Department of Transportation (DOTr), initiated the Public Utility Jeepney Modernization Program (PUJMP) in 2017. This program aims to address environmental and transportation concerns by modernizing the jeepney fleet. The program mandates the installation of GPS, automated fare collection systems, and CCTV cameras (Mateo-Babiano et al., 2020; Mettke et al., 2019). Additionally, vehicles must meet Euro-4 or Philippine National Standards (PNS)-compliant engine specifications, or utilize LPG, electric, or hybrid technologies, with units older than 15 years ineligible for registration.

Despite its intentions, the PUJMP has sparked significant controversy and protests from jeepney drivers and operators, particularly regarding the PUJMP’s fleet modernization, industry consolidation, and improved stakeholder communication components. These protests have resulted in multiple delays to the phase-out of traditional jeepneys, first moving from June 30 to December 31, 2023, and subsequently to April 30, 2024 (Fernandez, 2023; Relativo, 2024b). Critics argue that the program disproportionately affects jeepney drivers and operators, labeling it as anti-poor and inequitable. These concerns raise fundamental questions about the ethics and accountability of the political and administrative leaders responsible for the program’s implementation (Rivas, 2023).

Significance of the Study

The Public Utility Jeepney Modernization Program (PUJMP) has become a focal point for examining the ethical dimensions of government-led modernization initiatives in the public transportation sector. As public administration studies addressing the ethical implications of such programs are scarce, this research aimed to fill this critical gap, particularly in the context of transportation policies. The study also drew attention to the challenges faced by governments in reconciling conflicting stakeholder interests and addressing the unintended consequences of public innovations.

This challenge is not unique to the Philippines. Similar modernization efforts, such as the Indonesia Mass Transit Project, India’s transition to electric rickshaws, and the phase-out of *peseros* in Mexico, have faced comparable difficulties where economic marginalization, stakeholder inclusion (drivers, operators,

and passengers), cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability collided, often with unintended negative impacts on vulnerable groups (Beyer, 2019; Borrowing Agency, 2022; Harding et al., 2016; Kanuri et al., 2023; Mendelson, 2016; Rubiano, 2013). These global cases underscore a common issue in public administration: the failure to reconcile modernization efforts with the socio-cultural and economic realities of the affected sectors.

Given these international parallels, the PUJMP's challenges resonate beyond the Philippines, making this research relevant both locally and globally. By exploring the perverse effects of public innovation, this study seeks to establish a foundation for developing more equitable policies that prioritize stakeholder inclusion and value reconciliation. It contributes to the broader discourse on public sector innovation by offering insights into how ethical theories and value-based frameworks can guide policy implementation. Through examining the ethical dilemmas inherent in modernization efforts, this research provides actionable recommendations for crafting policies that are just, inclusive, and equitable while pursuing sustainable development.

Therefore, this study explored how the Philippine government exercised ethics and accountability in the PUJMP, how it addressed value pluralism in the implementation process, the ethical implications of the program's unintended consequences, and what recommendations can be made to improve the program's ethical implementation.

Study Framework

This study employed Alfiller's Political-Administrative Accountability Continuum and Spicer's Value Pluralism as theoretical frameworks to analyze the ethical, governance, and accountability challenges in PUJMP's implementation. These frameworks were selected for their complementary approaches: Alfiller's continuum examines power dynamics and accountability structures, while Spicer's framework addresses the ethical complexities of balancing conflicting stakeholder values. Together, they provided a comprehensive analytical lens for exploring the governance failures and ethical trade-offs inherent in the program.

Theoretical Framework

Alfiller's Political-Administrative Accountability Continuum

Alfiller's Continuum (2003) examines the relationship between political leaders and career administrators in the exercise of power and accountability. Accountability ensures that public power is "constrained by external means and internal norms" (Alfiller, 2003, p. 842), fostering responsible governance. Within this framework, political leaders are accountable to the public for setting policy directions, while career administrators are accountable to political leaders for policy implementation. This shared responsibility between political and administrative actors ensures that both levels of government play essential roles in shaping policy outcomes (Alfiller, 2003).

Alfiller's Continuum was selected for its capacity to illuminate the power dynamics and accountability structures governing the PUJMP. The program's implementation involves multiple levels of authority, with policy decisions made by elected officials and administrative actions executed by various agencies. This framework provides a systematic approach for analyzing how accountability gaps and governance failures emerge when the responsibilities of political and administrative actors become misaligned—a central concern in evaluating the PUJMP's implementation challenges.

Spicer's Value Pluralism

Spicer's (2001) Value Pluralism theory addresses the ethical dilemmas that emerge when public administrators must reconcile conflicting values from multiple stakeholders. The theory emphasizes that public administrators must balance these diverse and often contradictory values (Spicer, 2009; Wagenaar, 1999), rather than imposing a single value system (Spicer, 2001). This approach promotes inclusive decision-making (de Graaf et al., 2016), policy alignment (Spicer, 2018), and value reconciliation (Spicer, 2010), while minimizing harmful trade-offs (Le Grand, 2007). In the context of the PUJMP, Value Pluralism becomes essential as it acknowledges the competing interests of jeepney drivers, operators, commuters, and government officials.

This framework was chosen specifically for its capacity to address the ethical complexities inherent in public policy implementation, particularly where multiple stakeholder values must be carefully balanced. The theory enables public administrators to navigate tensions between conflicting interests while ensuring ethical decision-making that incorporates diverse perspectives. Understanding this theoretical approach is vital for analyzing the perverse effects observed in the PUJMP, where unresolved value conflicts have generated significant unintended consequences.

Conceptual Framework

Building on Alfiller's Political-Administrative Accountability Continuum and Spicer's Value Pluralism, a conceptual framework was developed to integrate these theories into a cohesive analytical model for examining the Public Utility Jeepney Modernization Program (PUJMP). While Alfiller's Continuum primarily addresses accountability mechanisms and power dynamics between political leaders and administrative bodies (Alfiller, 2003), Spicer's framework examines the ethical complexities arising from conflicting stakeholder values (Spicer, 2001, 2009). The integration of these theoretical perspectives provides a comprehensive lens for examining both governance challenges and ethical trade-offs in the PUJMP, offering nuanced insight into how political accountability intersects with the reconciliation of diverse stakeholder interests.

The conceptual framework depicted below illustrates the interplay among Elected Officials, Career Administrators, and Stakeholders, highlighting the roles of key values such as environmental sustainability, culture, accountability, social equity, industry, inclusivity, and societal impact. These values appear as overlapping colored circles between the three domains, visually demonstrating how competing values influence decision-making and policy outcomes in the PUJMP.

In PUJMP implementation, accountability operates through the actions of Elected Officials, who shape the policy framework, and Career Administrators (including the Department of Transportation [DOTr] and the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board [LTFRB]), who execute operational policies according to legal and technical requirements (Alfiller, 2003). Both groups make decisions influenced by their personal values, political motivations, and ideological priorities, represented as colored circles within their respective domains (Chandler & Plano, 1982). These values directly affect program outcomes, as the priorities held by each group may either align or conflict during policy implementation.

Within this framework, value pluralism becomes essential for understanding the conflicting stakeholder interests that emerge during program implementation. This approach emphasizes the importance of balancing competing interests through inclusive decision-making, ensuring that diverse perspectives inform both policy formulation and implementation (Spicer, 2010, 2018). Such balance proves crucial for

mitigating tensions and maintaining accountability across diverse stakeholder groups, including jeepney drivers, operators, commuters, and government officials (Alfiller, 2003; Spicer, 2009).

However, accountability gaps emerge when the values and responsibilities of elected officials and career administrators become misaligned (Alfiller, 2003; Spicer, 2001). These gaps create “zones of value tension,” where conflicting objectives intersect without achieving reconciliation, resulting in “perverse effects.” Such effects occur when the program’s intended objectives remain unrealized, thereby undermining the PUJMP’s capacity to achieve its goals. The framework represents these tensions visually through gray-shaded zones beneath the overlapping circles.

Successful value reconciliation eliminates the “gray zone of value tension,” leaving only overlapping-colored circles. This transformation signifies balanced governance, where public officials’ actions align with stakeholder needs, producing coherent and inclusive policy outcomes that accommodate diverse values (Spicer, 2009, 2010, 2018). For instance, while the national government may prioritize accelerated phaseout of traditional jeepneys (depicted by the green circle in the Elected Officials domain), career administrators often encounter resistance from stakeholders emphasizing economic survival, cultural heritage, and community stability (represented by red, purple, and yellow circles in the Stakeholders domain, respectively).

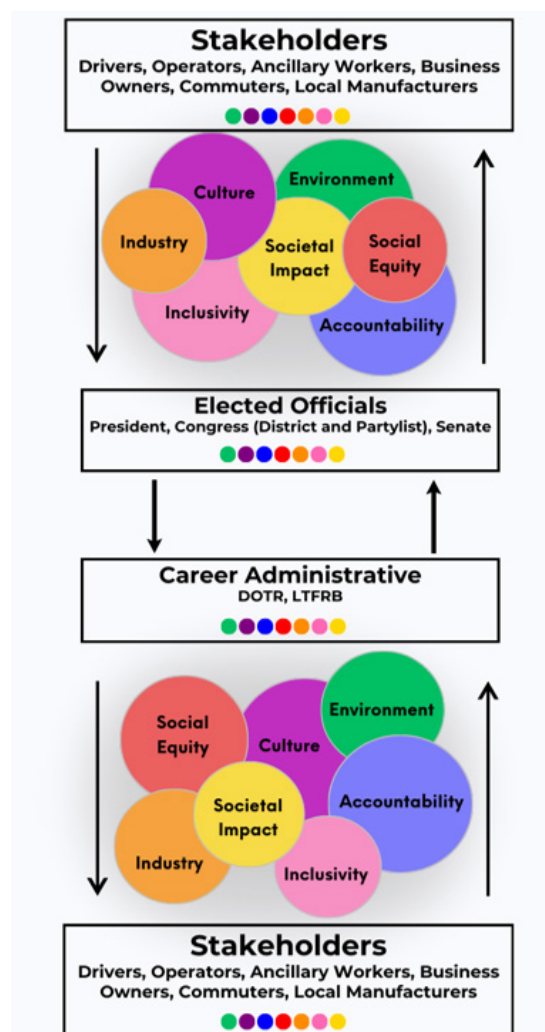


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of Accountability and Value Reconciliation in the PUJMP

Figure 1 illustrates how addressing these conflicting values through reconciliation can lead to more effective policy outcomes and greater stakeholder acceptance.

Solid arrows between the domains of Elected Officials, Career Administrators, and Stakeholders symbolize robust accountability flows and mutual responsiveness (Alfiller, 2003). The overlapping color-coded circles and solid arrows visually communicate the harmonization of diverse values, reflecting both technical requirements and ethical considerations in program implementation.

The framework’s central intersection underscores how unresolved value conflicts, combined with inadequate political and administrative accountability, produce negative policy outcomes. This integration demonstrates the necessity for ethical decision-making frameworks capable of reconciling conflicting values while ensuring that power is exercised responsibly and inclusively.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This qualitative multi-case study employed Alfiller’s Political-Administrative Accountability Continuum and Spicer’s Value Pluralism to examine the ethical dimensions and accountability practices within the Public Utility Jeepney Modernization Program (PUJMP). The research design focused on exploring the complexities of public sector innovation, particularly in contexts where value conflicts and unintended consequences—the “dark side” of public innovation—emerge (Yin, 2018).

The study utilized exclusively secondary data sources, including legislative records, policy documents, public statements, press releases, news articles, opinion pieces, prior research, and academic literature. These diverse sources provided comprehensive insight into the challenges and values associated with the PUJMP, illustrating how the Philippine government addressed ethical dilemmas in its modernization efforts. Secondary data was chosen due to the sensitivities and logistical challenges inherent in conducting fieldwork within the highly politicized and dynamic context of the program (Bowen, 2009).

This multi-source approach enabled triangulation, which enhanced the validity and reliability of the findings. The range of secondary data sources utilized in this study is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 *Summary of Included Secondary Data*

Data Source	Description	Purpose
Legislative Records and Policy Documents	National laws, department orders, memoranda, and circulars issued by the DOTr and LTFRB	Establish the legal and institutional framework for the PUJMP’s implementation
Public Statements and Press Releases	Official communications from political figures (e.g., the President, Congress, and DOTr officials)	Analyze political and administrative stances, strategic directives, and responses to public backlash
News Articles and Opinion Pieces	Media reports on the socio-economic impacts of PUJMP on jeepney operators, drivers, and commuters	Understand public sentiment, socio-economic implications, and contextual narratives
Prior Research and Academic Literature	Scholarly works on public transportation reform and modernization efforts in the Philippines and internationally	Provide a comparative framework to situate findings within broader research on public sector modernization

Document and content analysis methods were applied to examine the secondary data, utilizing an open and axial coding approach. MAXQDA 2020 software facilitated this analytical process, ensuring rigor and transparency through consistent data organization and management.

During the open coding phase, textual data were segmented into discrete units and coded according to key terms, concepts, and patterns relevant to the research questions. This initial analysis aimed to identify themes related to accountability, value pluralism, and ethical considerations within the PUJMP context. The subsequent axial coding phase involved grouping these initial codes into higher-order themes that reflected the relationships and interactions between different conceptual elements.

These emergent themes were then systematically mapped onto the theoretical frameworks of Alfiller’s Accountability Continuum and Spicer’s Value Pluralism. This mapping process illuminated how value conflicts and accountability gaps contributed to the unintended perverse effects observed in the PUJMP’s implementation. Throughout the analysis, particular attention was devoted to identifying intersections between themes, reflecting the integrated nature of the study’s conceptual framework and the interconnected challenges within the modernization program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Political Accountability

Political accountability is critical for ensuring that elected officials are held responsible for their policy decisions and outcomes. As outlined by Alfiller (2003) in the Political-Administrative Accountability Continuum, political leaders have a duty to advocate for and safeguard the interests of their constituencies. In the PUJMP context, the political accountability of key figures, such as President Marcos Jr. and DUMPER PTDA Party List Representative Bautista-Lim, has significantly influenced the program’s trajectory and stakeholder relations.

Both leaders were elected during the 2022 Philippine National Elections with campaign promises that positioned them as advocates for the transport sector, particularly in addressing the concerns of jeepney drivers and operators (Newell and Mulvaney, 2013). However, their subsequent policy actions have revealed a substantial gap between campaign commitments and actual implementation, which has deepened stakeholder exclusion and intensified resistance to the program. Table 2 presents a comparative analysis of their campaign promises against the actions they implemented after assuming office, covering the period from June 2022 to December 2024.

Table 2 *Election Campaign versus Actual Efforts in the PUJMP Implementation*

Key Stakeholder	Campaign Promises Made	Actual Efforts Made
President Marcos Jr. (Beltran, 2023; Cupin, 2023; Varcas, 2024; Yu, 2023)	Preventing the phaseout; providing decent homes and livelihoods for affected drivers and operators	Issued a statement on revisiting implementation timelines, but took no concrete action or initiated further stakeholder dialogues; dismissed Senate appeals to halt PUJMP
DUMPER PTDA Party List Rep. Bautista-Lim (DUMPER PTDA Party List, 2022; House of Representatives, n.d.; Quismorio, 2023b)	Advocated for protecting the rights of transport workers; ensuring their safety and livelihood	Filed only five transportation-related bills (three as principal author and two as co- author), none of which addressed PUJMP’s socio-economic impacts; failed to propose an alternative implementation plan

The disconnect between campaign promises and policy implementation revealed a critical deficit in political accountability. President Marcos Jr.’s response was limited to issuing general statements reiterating pre-existing plans, and he ultimately dismissed appeals from Senators to modify the April 30, 2024, PUJ

consolidation deadline (Relativo, 2023b, 2024b; Varcas, 2024). This lack of meaningful engagement and failure to address stakeholder concerns demonstrated a perfunctory approach to leadership and policy implementation.

Rep. Bautista-Lim's response similarly reflected inadequate political accountability. Her assertion that PUJMP compliance was feasible simply because other regions had managed similar consolidations revealed a simplistic understanding of the issue, disregarding the unique socio-demographic challenges faced by her constituents (Cordero, 2023). Rather than addressing these substantive concerns, her legislative focus shifted to symbolic initiatives, including declaring May 8th a special holiday for transport workers (HB01985), drafting a bill of rights for commuters (HB02920), and establishing the *Tsuperhero*

Recognition Program (HB04034). While these efforts were well-intentioned, they failed to address the immediate financial and operational hardships confronting jeepney drivers and operators.

This reactive pattern from both leaders exemplified what Varela (1996) termed a "culture of mediocrity," where political figures respond only when compelled by external pressures. For instance, Marcos Jr. issued his stance on the PUJMP only days before the nationwide transport strike (Cupin, 2023), while Bautista-Lim released her statement only after several other legislators had voiced their concerns regarding the program's implementation challenges. (Porcalla, 2023).

Rather than adopting the reconciliatory approach advocated by Spicer (2010) for accommodating conflicting values, both leaders neglected the socio-demographic realities facing jeepney drivers and operators (Gatarin, 2023). This reactive stance contributed to broader governance failures characterized by performative politics rather than substantive accountability.

The inadequate responses from both leaders perpetuated the exclusionary effects of the PUJMP, intensifying economic displacement and fueling social unrest. Their inaction and superficial engagement revealed deeper ethical failures embedded in the program's design and implementation. By failing to prioritize genuine stakeholder inclusion and meaningful accountability, President Marcos Jr. and Representative Bautista-Lim amplified the negative consequences of the PUJMP, exposing systemic inadequacies within the existing governance mechanisms.

Participative Governance

Participative governance is crucial for ensuring that policymaking responds to the needs of all affected stakeholders (Palumbo, 2017). It involves establishing inclusive processes for stakeholder engagement and bridging the gap between institutions and citizens to enhance policy effectiveness and inclusivity (de Graaf et al., 2016). In the PUJMP context, participative governance becomes essential for addressing conflicting stakeholder values, particularly the tension between environmental sustainability objectives and the socio-economic realities faced by jeepney drivers and operators (Spicer, 2009).

Alfiller's (2003) Political-Administrative Accountability Continuum emphasizes that accountability requires policymakers to maintain open communication channels with their constituents to uphold democratic governance. However, the PUJMP's implementation has been fundamentally undermined by inadequate stakeholder engagement, particularly with jeepney drivers, operators, and transport groups—effectively bypassing them as direct stakeholders despite being the program's primary targets (Bueno, 2020).

The memorandum circular (D.O. 2017-011) that guided the PUJMP's implementation exemplified this exclusionary approach. The directive failed to consider the lived realities of jeepney drivers and operators or acknowledge the broader socio-economic challenges they face. Instead, the program prioritized

procedural compliance while neglecting the very groups it was designed to support (Sunio et al., 2019). This top-down, bureaucratic model of policy implementation undermined the program’s transparency, inclusiveness, and accountability, ultimately eroding its legitimacy among affected communities (Gatarin, 2023). The pandemic, alongside rising costs of goods and fuel, exacerbated the financial struggles of jeepney drivers and operators, who were already facing systemic inequities (Alegado & Calonzo, 2020; Bueno, 2020; Global Petrol Prices, 2024).

Despite repeated calls for participative consultation, the government consistently ignored alternative proposals and insights from transport groups, instead conducting superficial consultative meetings with predetermined outcomes (Orellana, 2018). These sessions provided minimal opportunity for meaningful policy revision based on stakeholder input, effectively reducing participation to ceremonial exercises rather than genuine engagement.

This pattern of exclusion is evident in the government’s treatment of specific stakeholder proposals. The National Confederation of Transport Workers’ Union (NCTU) proposed a phased implementation timeline and increased subsidies to address operational challenges, but these recommendations were dismissed without meaningful consideration, and no policy adjustments were made to alleviate the financial burdens facing drivers and operators (Bueno, 2020). Similarly, comprehensive proposals from the Association Committed Transport Organization Nationwide Cooperation (ACTONA) and *Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Tsuper at Operator Nationwide (PISTON)* for affordable, sustainable, and locally manufactured jeepneys were disregarded without serious review (De Guzman, 2023; Relativo, 2023a).

Table 3 Stakeholder Exclusion and Consequences in the PUJMP

Stakeholder Group	Proposed Inputs	Government Response	Impact of Exclusion
NCTU (Bueno, 2020)	Proposed phased timelines, increased subsidies for low-income drivers and operators	Dismissed as unfeasible; focused on rigid deadlines	Increased resistance, culminating in strikes
PISTON (Orellana, 2018; Relativo, 2023a)	Advocated for a socially just modernization program, protecting small drivers and operators from economic exclusion; proposed locally sourced modernization approach	No changes to financial schemes; continued “one-size-fits-all” approach	Mobilization and public protests against the program
ACTONA (De Guzman, 2023)	Proposed affordable, locally manufactured jeepneys with traditional designs: Php 1.3 million compared to the approximate Php 2.4 to 2.8 million required for imported models	Proposal dismissed without review	Increased public skepticism, perceptions of government neglect, and resistance

The exclusion of both direct and indirect stakeholders from meaningful participation resulted in a deeply flawed policy that failed to address the sector’s socio-economic and cultural values through inclusive and deliberative processes (Gatarin, 2023; Mendoza, 2021). This failure in participative governance led to heightened resistance and social unrest, as evidenced by nationwide transport strikes (Sunio et al., 2019), while simultaneously reinforcing existing power imbalances and undermining the legitimacy of the modernization efforts (Westerman, 2018).

Rather than adopting the pluralistic approach advocated by Spicer (2001), the PUJMP violated fundamental principles of value pluralism by imposing a one-size-fits-all solution that alienated the very stakeholders it aimed to benefit. This approach directly contradicted the accountability framework outlined by Alfiller (2003), perpetuating governance failures that could have been avoided through genuine stakeholder inclusion and value reconciliation.

Erasure on the Country's Unique Identity

The traditional Filipino jeepney is a unique cultural artifact that symbolizes the creativity, resilience, and post-colonial identity of the Filipino people (Meiners, 2016; Mendoza, 2021; Rimmer, 1986). Originally born from the ingenuity of Filipinos who repurposed surplus military vehicles during the American colonial period, the jeepney was transformed into a public transportation vehicle characterized by distinct, vibrant designs (Lopez, 2021; Meiners, 2016; Mendoza, 2021). However, the PUJMP's emphasis on modernizing the jeepney fleet has unintentionally jeopardized the preservation of this iconic symbol. While the program's primary objective focuses on addressing environmental concerns, it has overlooked the deep cultural significance that the jeepney holds for the Filipino people.

The program's strict focus on environmental compliance, particularly adherence to the Clean Air Act of 2009, has resulted in prioritizing foreign-manufactured, mass-produced vehicles over locally designed jeepneys (Regidor et al., 2009). These "modern jeepneys," often resembling mini-buses or coasters imported from China, bear little resemblance to their traditional counterparts and lack the individuality and artistic expression that have historically defined the Filipino jeepney (Dela Peña, 2024).

Despite assurances from the Department of Transportation (DOTr) that local manufacturers would receive priority, the reality has proven otherwise (Dela Cruz, 2023; Sarao, 2023). Local manufacturers, such as Francisco Motors, have presented viable, modernized alternatives that retain traditional design elements while meeting environmental standards. For instance, the "Francisco Jeepney" was priced at PhP 985,000 for the first 1,000 units, significantly lower than the PhP 2.4 to 2.8 million required for imported Euro-4 compliant models (Baroña, 2023; Fuentes & Pascual, 2022).

However, these culturally relevant alternatives have been largely disregarded by the government, which has instead focused on supporting the importation of foreign models (Vego, 2024). Consequently, local manufacturers have been forced to self-finance their prototypes without necessary government incentives for mass production (Sunio et al., 2019). This preference for imported models over locally manufactured alternatives has not only sidelined local industries but also deprived the nation of opportunities to foster domestic research and development, generate local employment, and alleviate the economic burden on small jeepney drivers and operators (Baroña, 2023; Villaruel, 2024).

The exclusion of local innovation has reinforced the erroneous notion that modernization must come at the cost of cultural preservation (Acebuche, 2024; Elchico, 2023). By disregarding the potential for integrating cultural heritage into modernization efforts, the program has missed an opportunity to create a more inclusive vision of progress. Alfiller's (2003) Political-Administrative Accountability Continuum asserts that policymakers must consider not only technical and environmental needs but also the cultural values of affected stakeholders. Similarly, Spicer's (2009, 2010) Value Pluralism advocates for approaches that reconcile diverse values such as cultural identity and economic feasibility. The failure to integrate cultural preservation into the PUJMP has limited the program's potential to foster local innovation, protect cultural heritage, and contribute to a more inclusive, culturally rich vision of progress.

Socio-Demographic Profile of Jeepney Drivers and Operators

Understanding the socio-demographic profile of jeepney drivers and operators is essential for evaluating the broader impact of the PUJMP on this sector. Policymakers have an inherent responsibility to consider these demographics in their decision-making processes to avoid exacerbating the vulnerabilities of a group already marginalized within the formal economy (Alfiller, 2003).

The majority of jeepney operators are between the ages of 30 and 49, with a significant portion nearing retirement (Abuzo et al., 2017). This demographic reality presents immediate challenges in securing long-term loans for vehicle modernization, as financial institutions often view older operators as high-risk borrowers (Abuzo et al., 2017; Bueno, 2020).

Moreover, limited educational attainment and financial literacy compound these challenges, with many operators struggling to navigate complex loan structures without substantial external support (Ricaña, 2023). As a result, many operators find themselves trapped in cycles of financial instability, unable to meet the high costs associated with modernization.

These age-related barriers to financing are further complicated by operators' reliance on informal lenders with high interest rates. Limited access to formal credit institutions due to their age and income profile leaves them vulnerable to debt traps (Abuzo et al., 2017; Bueno, 2020). The current financing schemes under the PUJMP are primarily tailored to larger cooperatives or younger, financially stable drivers, further marginalizing small-scale, older operators (Bueno, 2020; Lago, 2024; Mendoza, 2021).

The financial pressures facing operators have intensified significantly in recent years. Jeepney operators' daily earnings have drastically declined, now averaging between PhP 300 and 500, compared to PhP 1,000 before the pandemic (Alegado & Calonzo, 2020). This substantial income reduction has made it unfeasible for operators to meet monthly amortization costs for new vehicles, which can range from PhP 2.4 to 2.8 million for imported models (Bueno, 2020).

Consequently, many operators have been forced to exit the sector entirely or pursue alternative livelihoods, such as small-scale entrepreneurial ventures. This exodus further destabilizes the sector and undermines government efforts to consolidate the jeepney fleet under larger cooperatives (Gatarin, 2023; Klopp, 2021; Mendoza, 2021).

Beyond economic considerations, the emotional and cultural dimensions of jeepney ownership present additional challenges. For drivers and operators, the jeepney represents more than a vehicle or means of transport—it embodies a cherished family legacy passed down through generations, a source of livelihood, and a symbol of identity and purpose (Gatarin, 2023; Lago, 2024; Mendoza, 2021). This emotional attachment is rarely factored into policy evaluations, despite its profound impact on drivers' and operators' willingness to engage in modernization efforts. The jeepney symbolizes community connections, individual entrepreneurship, and Filipino ingenuity, making the transition to standardized, modernized units particularly challenging for those who feel disconnected from the new designs (Bueno, 2020).

The psychological toll of this forced transition cannot be understated. Drivers and operators experience anxiety, uncertainty, and disempowerment as they abandon a way of life they have known for decades, all while confronting their diminished ability to provide for their families (Sarao, 2022).

The systematic exclusion of these socio-economic realities reflects a broader governance failure. As Alfiller (2003) and Spicer (2009, 2010) have argued, policies must reconcile diverse values such as cultural identity and economic viability while addressing the unique challenges faced by stakeholders. Without such comprehensive considerations, the PUJMP risks deepening the marginalization of the very stakeholders it

aims to support. Until the government adopts a multifaceted approach that integrates these diverse factors, the PUJMP will continue to be viewed not as a genuine pathway to progress but as a catalyst for socio-economic displacement (Bueno, 2020).

Financial Inequity and Lack of Access

Financial inequity represents a fundamental barrier to the successful implementation of the PUJMP. Jeepney drivers and operators, who predominantly come from low-income backgrounds, face considerable challenges in securing the financial resources necessary to comply with the program's modernization requirements. The cost of modernization—ranging from PhP 2.4 to PhP 2.8 million per unit, excluding mandated additions such as Wi-Fi and CCTV—places an unsustainable financial burden on operators who are already struggling to make ends meet (Mendoza, 2021).

Even with access to loans from the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) or the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP), the required repayment periods of up to seven years prove unrealistic given the socio-economic profiles and earning capacity of most drivers (Beltran, 2023).

Table 4 *Unintended Consequences in Financing Schemes*

Stakeholders	Current Realities courtesy of PUJMP	Unintended Consequences
Jeepney Drivers (Beltran, 2023; Bueno, 2020; Cabrera, 2019; Mendoza, 2021)	Required to secure PhP 2.8 million for vehicle replacement through cooperatives, including additional requirements like Wi-Fi and CCTV, with only 5.7% subsidized by the government	Monthly loan payments of PhP 38,000 to PhP 40,000 lead to financial instability and increasing debt burden
Jeepney Operators (Gatarin, 2023; Mateo-Babiano et al., 2020; Mendoza, 2021; Yee, 2017)	Must form cooperatives, secure garage spaces for 130% of units, and agree to a 6% interest rate for an equity subsidy of PhP 80,000 to PhP 60,000 via DBP and LBP loans	Financial pressures from fuel costs, salaries, and late loan repayment penalties risk insolvency and monopolization by larger companies
DBP and LBP (Mendoza, 2021; Mettke et al., 2019; Quismorio, 2023a; Sunio & Mendejar, 2022)	Lack of a comprehensive financial plan for PUJMP; unclear capacity to finance modernization of 180,000 units	Risk of privatization as private investors intervene; potential depletion of financial reserves to cover extensive modernization
DOTr (DBM, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025; Gatarin, 2023; Quismorio, 2023a; Senate of the Philippines, 2023; Yu, 2023)	PhP 1.05 billion allocated for equity subsidies and PhP 750 million for social support in 2022; PhP 200 million for social support in 2023; PhP 1.6 billion annually in 2024 and 2025 for modernization, with no clear allocation for social support	Delayed fund disbursement, inefficiency, and program delays exacerbate public mistrust; unclear utilization of funds raises sustainability concerns

The Department of Transportation (DOTr) allocated PhP 1.05 billion for equity subsidies and PhP 750 million for social support in 2022 (DBM, 2022). However, by March 2023, only PhP 39.24 million had been disbursed, with PhP 95.5 million still pending (Quismorio, 2023a). These significant delays in fund distribution highlighted administrative inefficiencies and raised serious questions about the DOTr's capacity to manage large-scale modernization initiatives effectively.

The funding situation deteriorated further in subsequent years. In 2023, social support funding was reduced to PhP 200 million, reflecting diminished government prioritization of the program (DBM, 2023;

Yu, 2023). While PhP 1.6 billion was allocated annually for modernization in 2024 and 2025, the absence of specific allocations for social support intensified concerns over program transparency and long-term sustainability. These budgetary issues, coupled with growing public unrest, prompted legislative scrutiny of the program's effectiveness (Abasola, 2024; Felipe et al., 2024). The Senate's consideration of halting the program could have devastating consequences for drivers and operators who have already sold old units and invested heavily in compliance, leaving them financially vulnerable and at risk of losing their livelihoods (Varcas, 2024).

Beyond budgetary concerns, the program's financing structure itself presents fundamental challenges. The rigid framework, characterized by high interest rates, stringent loan terms, and the absence of affordable credit options, has intensified financial strain on drivers and operators, leaving them with few viable alternatives (Bueno, 2020; Gatarin, 2023; Mendoza, 2021; Yee, 2017). Operators who fail to consolidate or meet modernization requirements face route monopolization by large transport companies, reducing their earning potential and capacity to repay loans (Lago, 2024; Mendoza, 2021). Additionally, uncertainty surrounding banks' ability to sustain the financing model has raised further doubts about the program's long-term feasibility (Sunio & Mendejar, 2022).

These structural and financial flaws reflect deeper issues in policy design and stakeholder engagement. Rather than addressing the unique challenges faced by small operators, the PUJMP has reinforced existing financial inequities, prioritizing compliance and efficiency over inclusivity and equity (Yee, 2017). This top-down approach embodies singular bureaucratic values that fail to consider the lived realities of affected stakeholders (Spicer, 2001).

Ignoring Societal Impact

The societal implications of the PUJMP extended far beyond its direct stakeholders—jeepney drivers and operators. By neglecting to consider the perspectives of indirect stakeholders such as commuters, ancillary workers, and local businesses, policymakers inadvertently triggered a cascade of unintended consequences that disrupted the socio-economic and cultural fabric intricately woven into traditional jeepney operations (Gatarin, 2023). This oversight underscored a governance deficit marked by exclusionary policy-making processes, resulting in policies that failed to capture the multifaceted realities of the communities they aimed to serve (Alfiller, 2003).

Commuter Exclusion and Economic Impact

Commuters, as the primary users of public transport, represent a critical stakeholder group whose insights should have been integral to the PUJMP's design. Traditional jeepneys function as public goods, providing affordable and accessible transportation for millions of Filipinos daily (Dimalanta et al., 2023). However, the absence of commuter representation during the program's formulation reflected a top-down approach that disregarded their lived experiences and mobility needs (Cruz, 2024).

This disconnect became evident in the projected fare hikes driven by modernization costs, which effectively shifted the financial burden onto passengers (Beltran, 2023). Estimates indicated that minimum fares could increase by as much as 300%, disproportionately affecting low-income commuters and triggering broader socio-economic repercussions, including rising living costs and increased wage demands (Mendoza, 2021; Relativo, 2024a). Alfiller's (2003) emphasis on participatory governance highlights this omission as a critical flaw, underscoring the need for co-creating policies with affected communities to ensure both equity and accessibility.

Displacement of Ancillary Workers

Ancillary workers, whose livelihoods are intrinsically tied to the traditional jeepney ecosystem, have similarly been marginalized. These workers—including “barkers” who attract passengers by calling out destinations, “starters” who organize boarding sequences, and “*bantays*” who safeguard parked jeepneys—form an essential part of the micro-economy surrounding jeepney operations (Mateo-Babiano et al., 2020). These roles, often overlooked in formal policy discussions, support thousands of informal workers across the country.

By phasing out traditional jeepneys, the PUJMP inadvertently eliminated these employment opportunities, leaving ancillary workers economically vulnerable and socially excluded. Their displacement disrupted not only individual livelihoods but also amplified urban poverty and destabilized the socio-economic fabric of neighborhoods dependent on these services.

Impact on Local Business Ecosystems

Local businesses along jeepney routes represent another critical group adversely affected by the PUJMP. These enterprises—ranging from mobile vendors to vulcanizing shops, auto-repair services, spare parts providers, *karinderyas* (eateries), and small roadside establishments—have traditionally depended on the economic activity generated by jeepney operations (Bernal and Koh, 2023; Gatarin, 2023; Orias, 2018). The decline in traditional jeepney operations has significantly reduced customer footfall, forcing many businesses to close and threatening the economic stability of entire communities.

Systemic Governance Failures

The exclusion of these critical stakeholders exemplifies a myopic approach to modernization, one that failed to anticipate its far-reaching societal impacts. The absence of adequate and comprehensive transition planning for ancillary workers, commuters, and local businesses reveals a broader disregard for the socio-economic structures that have traditionally supported the transport sector. Without such holistic consideration, the program has jeopardized the livelihoods of those directly and indirectly involved in jeepney operations, creating a ripple effect of socio-economic distress that extends beyond individual families to entire communities.

Value Pluralism and Synthesis

The implementation of the Public Utility Jeepney Modernization Program (PUJMP) has unveiled significant governance challenges, particularly in the realms of value pluralism, stakeholder exclusion, and political-administrative accountability (Alfiller, 2003; Bueno, 2020; de Graaf et al., 2016; Spicer, 2001). While the program aimed to modernize the Philippine jeepney fleet to meet environmental standards, such as those outlined by the Clean Air Act of 2009, its primary emphasis on environmental sustainability overshadowed other critical values, including economic viability, cultural preservation, and the socio-economic realities faced by jeepney drivers, operators, and ancillary workers (Gatarin, 2023; Mendoza, 2021; Regidor et al., 2009; Spicer, 2001).

This singular focus on environmental goals, without integrating a broader value pluralism framework, led to substantial governance oversights (Alfiller, 2003; Le Grand, 2007). The exclusion of key stakeholders, particularly jeepney drivers and operators, from the decision-making process exacerbated the disconnect between the program’s intended objectives and on-the-ground realities (Bueno, 2020; Cruz, 2024). The

program’s top-down approach, which prioritized procedural compliance and adhered to rigid timelines, ignored the socio-demographic profiles of the affected stakeholders (Gatarin, 2023; Sunio et al., 2019).

Many jeepney operators and drivers faced financial instability and limited access to credit—challenges that were not adequately considered in the program’s design (Abuzo et al., 2017; Bueno, 2020; Gatarin, 2023; Mendoza, 2021; Yee, 2017). This failure to engage stakeholders meaningfully not only deepened existing economic inequalities but also generated cultural resistance, particularly due to the prioritization of foreign-manufactured jeepneys over locally designed alternatives that were more culturally resonant and aligned with Filipino identity (Cruz, 2024; Dela Cruz, 2023; Dela Peña, 2024; Gatarin, 2023; Lago, 2024; Mendoza, 2021; Sarao, 2023; Vego, 2024).

The absence of a value pluralism approach—where competing values and stakeholder perspectives are recognized and balanced—resulted in the program’s failure to achieve equitable and sustainable outcomes (Spicer, 2009, 2010). As Spicer (2001) argues, public policies must reconcile conflicting values rather than impose a dominant perspective. The exclusionary nature of the PUJMP exemplified this failure to integrate ethical frameworks, leading to unintended consequences including resistance, economic displacement, and cultural erasure (Bueno, 2020; Dela Peña, 2024; Gatarin, 2023; Mendoza, 2021; Yee, 2017).

The table below synthesizes key findings from the PUJMP’s implementation, highlighting the program’s failure to integrate value pluralism into its policy design and the resulting unintended consequences that emerged from this critical oversight.

Table 5 Synthesis of Key Findings in the PUJMP

Policy Dimension	Key Findings	Unintended Consequences
Political Accountability	Failure of political leaders to act on campaign promises; limited stakeholder engagement (Cupin, 2023; Porcalla, 2023; Relativo, 2023b, 2024b; Varcas, 2024)	Stakeholder resistance, social unrest, transport strikes, economic displacement, public distrust
Participative Governance	Exclusion of jeepney drivers, operators, and other key stakeholders from policy formulation to evaluation (Bueno, 2020; De Guzman, 2023; Orellana, 2018; Relativo, 2023a; Sunio et al., 2019)	Erosion of public trust, resistance to the program, widespread dissatisfaction
Cultural Erasure	Prioritization of foreign-manufactured models over locally designed jeepneys; neglect of cultural heritage preservation (Dela Cruz, 2023; Dela Peña, 2024; Gatarin, 2023; Mendoza, 2021; Sarao, 2023; Vego, 2024)	Displacement of local industries, lack of cultural resonance in modernized units, loss of cultural identity
Socio-Demographic Profile	Limited access to financing, economic- and age-related challenges in loan eligibility (Abuzo et al., 2017; Bueno, 2020; Gatarin, 2023; Lago, 2024; Mendoza, 2021; Ricaña, 2023)	Increased sectoral exit and heightened financial instability, particularly with older drivers and operators
Financial Inequity	Rigid, high-interest financing schemes that disproportionately burden low-income drivers and operators (Beltran, 2023; Bueno, 2020; Cabrera, 2019; Gatarin, 2023; Mateo-Babiano et al., 2020; Mendoza, 2021; Mettke et al., 2019; Quismorio, 2023a; Sunio & Mendejar, 2022; Yee, 2017)	Economic displacement, social unrest, monopolization of routes by large companies, lack of trust in financial institutions, high debt burden
Societal Impact	Failure to account for the broader impact on ancillary workers and commuters; displacement of ancillary actors and increased living costs for commuters due to fare hikes (Beltran, 2023; Bernal and Koh, 2023; Cruz, 2024; Gatarin, 2023; Mendoza, 2021; Orias, 2018; Relativo, 2024a)	Lack of affordable and accessible transport, increased living costs, social instability, loss of micro-economies, and urban poverty

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Public Utility Jeepney Modernization Program (PUJMP) presents a complex case study in public sector innovation, revealing how governance failures, accountability deficits, and unresolved value conflicts can undermine well-intentioned policies (Alfiller, 2003; Jordan, 2014; Spicer, 2001). This study, analyzed through Alfiller's Political-Administrative Accountability Continuum and Spicer's Value Pluralism frameworks, highlighted the critical roles that political accountability and value reconciliation play in policy implementation success or failure (Alfiller, 2003; Rivas, 2023; Spicer, 2009, 2010).

Framework Applications and Limitations

Alfiller's Continuum effectively captured the disconnect between political promises and administrative action, underscoring the imperative for political leaders to remain accountable to their constituencies (Alfiller, 2003; Rivas, 2023). However, while this framework illuminated governance gaps, it fell short in addressing the cultural and stakeholder dimensions central to understanding resistance to the PUJMP.

Spicer's Value Pluralism complemented this analysis by providing an analytical lens for examining competing values within the program, such as environmental sustainability, cultural preservation, and socio-economic equity (Spicer, 2001, 2009, 2010). Although Spicer's framework effectively highlighted the importance of balancing diverse values, it lacked concrete mechanisms for prioritizing or reconciling these values in practice, making the translation of insights into actionable recommendations more challenging.

The integration of these theoretical perspectives revealed that the program's failures stemmed from both political and administrative accountability gaps and the systematic failure to reconcile conflicting stakeholder values (Gatarin, 2023). Together, these frameworks provided a comprehensive understanding of why the PUJMP failed and offered valuable guidance for constructing more inclusive, balanced, and context-sensitive policies.

Recommendations for Policy Recalibration

In light of these findings, the following recommendations are proposed to recalibrate the PUJMP, aligning it more closely with principles of accountability, inclusivity, and sustainability:

Short-Term Actions

- Establish participatory governance mechanisms by formalizing stakeholder representation in policy reviews and creating advisory councils to ensure the inclusion of jeepney drivers, operators, commuters, and ancillary workers in policy design and review processes (Alfiller, 2003; Cruz, 2024; De Graaf & Van der Wal, 2010; Spicer, 2018)
- Create oversight structures through a multi-stakeholder committee to monitor program implementation and conduct periodic public consultations to ensure transparency and active public involvement (Alfiller, 2003; Spicer, 2009)
- Introduce regulatory flexibility by allowing the overhaul or retrofitting of older engines to meet carbon emission standards, providing more viable modernization options (Mendoza, 2021)
- Enhance financial support by re-allocating funds and instituting targeted assistance to reduce the financial burden on jeepney operators, particularly for securing necessary permits and licenses (Bueno, 2020)
- Explore incremental solutions by reevaluating the necessity of full fleet modernization and considering more gradual, localized approaches that address both environmental and socio-economic concerns (De Guzman, 2023; Relativo, 2023a)

Medium-Term Actions

- Prioritize local manufacturing by shifting production to domestic manufacturers to stimulate job creation, preserve cultural heritage, and reduce reliance on foreign imports (Baroña, 2023; De Guzman, 2023; Mendoza, 2021; Relativo, 2023a; Villaruel, 2024)
- Develop culturally appropriate designs by collaborating with local manufacturers to create prototypes that maintain traditional jeepney aesthetics while meeting modern environmental standards (Baroña, 2023; Fuentes & Pascual, 2022)
- Strengthen institutional capacity by assigning clear roles and responsibilities within government agencies to enhance transparency and ensure effective program execution, incorporating robust public feedback mechanisms (Alfiller, 2003)

Long-Term Actions

- Professionalize the transport sector by providing stable wages and social benefits for drivers and operators, fostering long-term career retention and professional development
- Implement comprehensive transport reform by addressing the root causes of carbon emissions through sustainable public transportation alternatives and integrated mobility solutions
- Reduce private vehicle dependency by enhancing public transportation infrastructure and implementing policies that incentivize public transit use over private car ownership

Implications and Future Directions

Without recalibrating policy to reflect these values, the PUJMP risks perpetuating a top-down governance model that reinforces inequities and undermines stakeholder trust (Meijer and Thaens, 2021). If left unaddressed, the program's current trajectory may continue to foster widespread resistance, policy failure, and impede the creation of a more inclusive and sustainable public transportation system. A value-pluralistic approach that accounts for the diverse needs and perspectives of all stakeholders will be essential to ensuring that the PUJMP not only meets its environmental goals but also serves the cultural, economic, and social needs of the Filipino people (Alfiller, 2003; Spicer, 2009, 2010, 2018).

By implementing these recommendations, the government can recalibrate the PUJMP to better reflect the diverse values of Filipino society, ensuring a more equitable, inclusive, and culturally sensitive modernization process (Alfiller, 2003; Spicer, 2009; Meijer and Thaens, 2021). These recommendations align with the broader goals of public innovation—balancing efficiency with equity, sustainability with inclusivity, and modernization with cultural preservation. Ultimately, these steps will help mitigate the perverse effects observed in the PUJMP and establish a precedent for future policy implementations that prioritize stakeholder values and promote social justice in public sector innovations.

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