

***Ili*-based Community Organising: An Igorot Indigenous Peoples' Concept for Grassroots Collaboration**

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Abstract

The growing demand for participatory community development approaches has greatly influenced the need to involve community people as active partners, rather than passive recipients of programs, projects and services. Participatory approaches operate on the premise that the local people are the ultimate change agents of their own communities and that their culture is an asset to their own development. For Indigenous communities, their Indigenous cultural and knowledge systems serve as tools for sustainable collaboration.

This article discusses how the *ili*-based community organising concept was developed by non-government organisations while working with the Igorot Indigenous Peoples in Northern Philippines. *Ili* is an Igorot word for 'home' or 'the land of one's birth', considered to be the Igorots' source of identity, belonging and life direction. The *ili*-based concept uses traditional knowledge, values and practices to facilitate the formation of People Organisations (POs). The concept is part of a wider research project on community development amongst the Igorot Indigenous Peoples of Benguet Province, Philippines.

Keywords: Indigenous community development, Indigenous knowledge and practices, Igorot, cultural ethics, peoples' organisations, community organising

Community development work in the Philippines evolved from its distinct social and political history. In the country's context, a strong civil society was instrumental in influencing politics and social life from the late 1960s to the mid-1980s, highlighted during the dictatorial rule of President Ferdinand and the People Power Revolution in 1986. The repressive situation resulted in the formation of Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) that aimed to organise the masses for two key different purposes: to wage armed and underground struggles against the regime, and to implement projects to help communities and lobby for sectoral reforms (Batistiana & Murphy, 1996). Cooperatives were formed, women's movements, peasants, fisher folks and Indigenous peoples were organised. Other venues of community development work were also explored such as livelihood, gender equality, ecology, alternative legal assistance, and support for migrant workers among others.

The Cordillera Region, specifically the Province of Benguet where this research was conducted, are recipients of numerous community development projects implemented by government, NGOs and private agencies with local and international funding. As one of the authors of this article is an Ibaloy-Kankanaey Igorot woman, her experience of being both a

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recipient and community organiser led her to investigate the community development concepts of the people in her province. This article will begin with the history of community development in Benguet, and then proceed to discuss *ili*-based community organising. *Ili* is an Ibaloy and Kankanaey language term which means 'home' or 'place of birth and origin'. The selected stories are used to illustrate the actual utilisation of the *ili* concept. Examples of success, challenges and potentials of the concept are also presented to conclude the paper.

Research Setting

Benguet Province of the Philippines is located at the Northern Luzon of the Cordillera Mountain Range with an estimated population of 372,533 in 2007 (Cabato, 2011). As a result of government legislation originating from the Spanish exploration in the seventeenth century, Benguet is subdivided into thirteen municipalities namely: Atok, Bakun, Bokod, Buguias, Itogon, Kabayan, Kapangan, Kibungan, La Trinidad, Mankayan, Sablan, Tuba and Tublay. La Trinidad is the capital town, and Baguio City, which used to be part of Benguet, is now the 'capital city' of the Cordillera Region. Baguio used to be designated as an American military rest camp and the centre for the American government agri-business, transportation and mining industry development in the 1900s.

Benguet is primarily rural and characterised by rugged terrain, and most interior communities can be accessed by public transport such as buses, jeepneys and trucks (in areas with rugged roads). Most of the community's source of income is upland farming at a subsistence level. The majority of business and trade takes place in Baguio City and La Trinidad, making the villages integrated into the local market economy. Although it is becoming increasingly diverse in population, the original settlers are the *Kankanaeys*, *Ibaloy*s and *Kalanguyas*.

Colonisation and development of the Igorots

Like the experience of many Indigenous Peoples, the Igorots' encounter with colonisation disrupted ways of knowing, learning and teaching. It also resulted in loss of lands, the erosion of cultures and ideas, and most importantly, the colonisation of minds (Wane, 2008, p.183). The effects of colonisation were compounded by the different theories and strategies of development where the 'western ways of knowing' were viewed and adopted as the model for developing the poorer nations of the world (Sillitoe, 2000). International development was designed and implemented in the framework of western societies (Campbell, Pratt, Guterl & Lee, 2007; Escobar, 1995; Said, 1989). From the colonial paradigm, literacy, numeracy, school, trades, socialisation and Christian morals were requisites of better living conditions.

The 'civilising mission' (Lewis & Murphy, 2006) during the American occupation of the Philippines was implemented through the introduction of Christianity, 'democratic' government, and formal education (Bagamaspad & Hamada-Pawid, 1985; Rigney, 1997). From the Spanish-run schools for priests and for Catechism purposes (Karnow, as cited in Brainard & Litton, 1999, p. 86-87), the American occupation brought colonial education to the people of the Philippines (Brainard & Litton, 1999, p. 86-87). Several authors argue that education was used as a tool to train Filipinos to adhere to the creation of an ideal American image (Brainard & Litton, 1999; Mendoza-Strobel, 2001; Pastores- Palffy, 1999). English was used as the medium of instruction in the schools; American soldiers were the first teachers, called 'Thomasites', and their educational materials were from the United States (Galang, 1999, as cited in Brainard & Litton, 1999, p. 87). This led to an entrenched colonialism among the Filipinos (Mendoza-Strobel, 2001). This is seen in the Filipinos' general view that their culture is second rate to the culture of the colonisers, which includes their delight in being able to speak English, and their pride in wearing American fashion (Constantino & Constantino, 1999; Ponce, 1980, p. 160). Consequently, Revilla (1996, p 101) observes that young Filipinos

today have an identity crisis that revolves around their lack of self-respect and self-love as Filipinos.

From 1907 to 1933, the missionaries claim to have Christianised 370,000 Igorots, which led to changes in the traditional structures of the culture (Medina, 2004, p. 98). Igorot scholars argue that colonisation made them “misinformed, miseducated, misrepresented, marginalised, left confused and forlorn” (Dacog, 2003, p. 6). Bagamaspad and Hamada-Pawid (1985) in *The Benguet History Project*, trace that Spanish and American colonisation created the term ‘Igorots’, which signify the distinction between lowland and highland Filipinos (Afable, 1998; Scott, 2006). The Spaniards who encountered resistance from the upland peoples created an image of the Igorots as ‘pagans’, ‘barbaric’, ‘savage’, ‘primitive’ and ‘backward’. This stigma of savagery led to the discrimination against Igorots in mainstream Filipino society (Scott, 2006, p. 7). Scott (2006) further argues that lowland religious conversion and affiliation with the colonial administrators made the Christianised Filipinos see themselves as superior to the Igorots and other ethnic groups in the country (Finin, 2005, p. 29). Discrimination is therefore perpetuated throughout the education system and structure primarily because everyone is required to adapt to the mainstream colonial education system (Mendoza-Strobel, 2001). Additionally, research done on the Igorots in the last one hundred years, has been conducted primarily by foreigners (Brainard & Litton, 1999), particularly colonial officials, foreign anthropologists, and Catholic and Anglican missionaries (Medina, 2004). From their perspectives, they had brought ‘civilisation’ to this mountain’s first people (Finin, 2005, p. 19-20; Scott, 2006).

Methodology

The participants in this study are 36 Igorots from Benguet province from different ages, economic and work backgrounds. The data used in this paper is drawn from stories, conversations and sharing about what community development means to the participants in relation to their Igorot culture and the current realities in their respective communities. The participants are from two groups: the first comprised young people aged 18 to 26, and the second comprised parents and elders between the ages of 40 and early 70s, and representing three ethnic groups – the *Ibaloys*, *Kankanaeys* and *Kalanguyas*. The participants shared the view that their cultural concepts, values and practices are important tools in promoting and working for the development of their communities - the *ili*.

Inspired by the growing number of scholars advocating Indigenous frameworks for research, we chose to employ Indigenous research methodology for this study. This is a methodology aimed at ‘mainstreaming’ Indigenous Peoples’ voices and knowledge systems (Batiste, 2000; Rigney, 1997; Smith, 1999). The utilisation of Indigenous frameworks, paradigms and methods is a result of adaption and creative additions to existing qualitative research methodologies from postmodern, postcolonial and critical theories that work on theorising the nature of the colonised and privileging the voice of the ‘other’ (Riley, 2009, p. 228).

We specifically drew our methodology from Indigenous research frameworks that resemble the Igorot experiences and understanding, specifically Martin’s (2003) *Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing* based on research in Indigenous Australia. Martin argues that there are three main constructs of *Quandamooka* ontology. The first is what she calls ‘ways of knowing’ (Martin, 2003, p. 9). Second is the ‘ways of being’, which refers to establishing relationships with the entities. The third is the ‘ways of doing’, which is enacting the knowledge system and maintaining the relationship with the entities and with all other beings as seen in the way of life, arts, songs, rituals and ceremonies performed in Indigenous communities (Martin, 2003, p. 11). The processes of knowledge acquisition and reproduction involves listening, viewing, reviewing, reading, watching, waiting, observing and application of learning (Martin, 2003, p. 7). The co-existence of the Aboriginal people with the entities is

where they learn, relearn, and pass on their knowledge system and wisdom. Drawing on Martin's framework, data gathered for this study employed the Igorot ways of learning called *pansukael*, an Ibaloy word, which means 'deep search for wisdom'. *Pansukael* entails the process of seeking wisdom to attain full development as a person, as a family and as a community. The search for wisdom in the process of *pansukael* takes different forms in the experiential and oral tradition and culture of the Igorots.

Sharing and discussion circles in *pan-iistorya* and *pantatabtaval*

From the stages of initial data gathering through to the analysis of data, sharing circles (Lavallée, 2009), called *pan-iistorya*, and discussion, *pantatabtaval* (Afable, 1998), were used in an attempt to strengthen the Igorots' participation in this research. Traditionally, these are the methods where elders share wisdom from the metaphors of life and experiences. *Pan-iistorya* is story sharing based on life experiences which traditionally happen during community gatherings and rituals, done by sitting (on the ground or inside the house) facing each other in a circular-like formation. Here the participants' perspectives on 'what is community' and 'what could bring development to the community' were asked. Central to this was their idea of education as a very important element in bringing them development. *Pantatabtaval* on the other hand, is the discussion and sharing of analysis, perspectives, ideas and feelings on given topics; in this case, pertaining to attaining higher education. The analysis of results and discussion of findings were also done within the sharing circles of *pan-iistorya*.

Field notes were written using the village language and then later in English after consultation with identified elders and community leaders, consistent with Bouma and Ling's (2004) stress on the importance of consulting an authority as a way of knowing in research.

Use of real names and local terminologies

Indigenous theorising affirms the importance of involving Indigenous communities as research participants (Anderson, 2009; Sillitoe, 2001). Its frameworks emphasise not only recognising and understanding, but also using the Indigenous community's knowledge systems, ways of life and cultural values to increase their participation in the research process (Enriquez, 1992; McCubin, 2009). The participants for this study opted to use their real names and stories. They also requested for the inclusion of the terms they commonly use and understand in their local Ibaloy, Kankanaey and Kalanguya languages. They viewed their participation in this research as part of their 'participation in real life', thus there was no need to use pseudonyms or aliases in sharing their Igorot knowledge systems.

Indigenous Knowledge in development practice

Over the last two decades, the use of Indigenous knowledge in development has become a mantra of sorts (Briggs, 2005, p. 3). From post development writers (Escobar, 1995) to the World Bank (2004), Indigenous knowledge represents a possible alternative for progress among the world's rural poor. As Escobar (1995, p. 98) states: "[t]he remaking of development must start by examining local constructions, to the extent that they are the life and history of the people, that is, the conditions for and of change". This implies a change that comes from within communities themselves, having confidence in and deploying Indigenous knowledge to, among other things, bring about economic and social progress. There is then a sense of the rural poor having a voice about progress which affects them, and outsiders listening seriously to what the rural poor have to say, learning from them, and respecting their realities and priorities (Chambers, 1983).

Many mainstream development agencies now use Indigenous knowledge as "part of their armoury" (Briggs, 2005, p. 3), institutionalising Indigenous knowledge through conferences,

development plans, and a broad acceptance by the development community of its value in addressing the concerns of the poor. Agrawal (1995, p. 415) argues that this is “a new populist rhetoric”. Without doubt, there is a conviction in many quarters of the need to tap into the stock of Indigenous knowledge if appropriate planning and land management strategies are to be developed in a sustainable way (Chokor & Odemerho, 1994; De Boef, Amanor & Wellard, 1993; Okali, Sumberg & Farrington, 1994).

The utilisation of Indigenous knowledge and culture to promote development, however, is not without debate from Indigenous scholars (Martin, 2003; Nakata, 2007). Because of its attractiveness as an alternative, it is argued that “there exists a real danger of over-valourising and over-romanticising Indigenous knowledge in practice” (Briggs, 2005, p. 18) and end up romanticising such communities (Schroeder, 1999). The difficulty then is that Indigenous knowledge tends not to be problematised, but is seen as a ‘given’, almost a benign and consensual knowledge, simply waiting to be tapped into. Thus, Indigenous knowledge can be seen as untainted, pristine and static – frozen in time. Kalland (2000) argues that such views generate images of people possessing little economic sophistication and engaging little with external markets.

This research reveals however, that the Igorot community are open to new ideas and change, as long as they are culturally acceptable. Igorot knowledge is fluid and constantly changing, reflecting renegotiations between the Igorot community and their environment (Sillitoe, 2000). This knowledge acquisition is dynamic and ever-changing, with people being open to new ideas, if they remain in control of their modernising impacts. The *ili* concept is one example of this, where community leaders and NGOs have incorporated Igorot assets, skills, cultural values and practices into community projects.

The *ili* as a foundation for community building

For the participants, the *ili* is a very important part of their Igorot identity. The *ili* is the village or town where Igorots were born, and additionally includes where their placenta was buried at birth, *nay-anakan/naikautan di puseg*; where they grew up, *binma-degan/dinmakdake-an*; where their family, relatives and clan lived and ‘multiplied’, *ebonatan/ekanakan*; and, the place where they will always come back to, *pan-udian/pantauli-an*. For most Igorots, the *ili* provides them with a sense of perpetual belonging to a community that plays a critical role in shaping their beliefs, values and views about the world as an individual and as member of an Indigenous group. It is the source of the stories of their ancestors, legends of their origin, and the biodiversity that provides for their daily existence.

The interconnectedness within the *ili* also extends outside their communities. In meeting someone for the first time for example, people ask ‘*into di kad-anyo*’ or ‘*tuwa e iliyo*’ (‘which village or town do you come from?’). By knowing this information, people start to do *tonton* (tracing back of ancestors’ origins) and other related topics including clan history, work, and farm crops. Exchanging conversations about the *ili* where one belongs makes people at ease to share their stories when they know that the person they are talking to is ‘related’ to them in some way. The relatedness makes people treat new acquaintances not as a stranger but like a family member. The expression ‘*enshigayam e ap-afil, sangkakhait kito*’ (‘we are not strangers to each other, we are related’) means that they are welcoming and accepting the person as someone belonging to their own family, clan and community.

Utilising the concept of *ili* in community building

The community workers and People Organizations’ (POs) leaders in this study believe that integrating the *ili* system is essential to implementing projects in Igorot communities. They argue that embedding culture-based concepts of development (*sigid/pansigedan*) is

important in strengthening community participation and action. Specifically, working with Igorot communities requires an understanding of what development is by “looking out through the window of the peoples’ culture” (N. Caoili, *personal communication*, 10 May 2009). Leaders pointed to the inclusion and implementation of the following three traditional Igorot values and practices in the *ili* as essential to their work.

1. Incorporating the traditional practice of working together in a community organisation through *alluyon*, *binnadang* and *ub-ubbo*

The practice of *alluyon* or *ub-ubbo* are examples of traditional practices that Igorot people have used to resist pressures of the changing times. Traditionally, *alluyon* means putting together a concerted effort as a community to help accomplish tasks related to farming, such as planting or harvesting crops. Labour exchange is conducted among neighbours until all families finish planting or harvesting their crops in each season. This makes farm work lighter and easier to get done. *Alluyon* also expands to mean ‘helping one another’. When someone in the community is in need, especially in difficult times (for example, sickness, death in a family, or in times of disasters), the community comes to the aid of whoever is in need. Similar to *alluyon*, Botangen, Vodanovich and Yu (2017, p. 2306) used the term *binnadang* to refer to Igorots’ traditional practice of volunteering for community work or contributing resources to help neighbours, village mates, clan members or relatives in need. *Binnadang* is considered as non-reciprocal, innate, and a spontaneous response to someone needing help in the Igorot *ili*. Other terms used by the participants to mean ‘working together’ are *ulnos* and *innatang* (L. Picart, *personal communication*, 10 May 2009).

As Igorots became participants in mainstream development initiatives, their practice of working together as a community found its application in current community development projects. Adelina, one of the elder participants, shared that despite subsistence living, their community still practice *alluyon* not only in farming, building a neighbour’s house, preparing and serving food, and doing work together during rituals, but also in community projects, such as the construction of a community hall, building and repair of schools, manual road works and road repairs after typhoons, clearing of communal pathways, and in organising POs (A. Pater, *personal interview*, 2 January 2009). Bernadette, manager at the Bad-ayan Buguias Development Multi-Purpose Cooperative (BABUDEMPCO), a community cooperative in Buguias, Benguet, claims that the growth of their cooperative is a result of cooperation among community members through the practice of *ub-ubbo*:

We started from humble beginnings; putting together the little money we had to start a credit cooperative in the late 60s. Officers gave their voluntary service for many years and the members, who were mostly farmers, worked together and helped one another with patience and determination to make our cooperative grow. Being a member of an ili gave us an innate sense of responsibility to work for the good of all (B. Willie, *personal communication*, 22 March 2009)

Today, BABUDEMPCO has grown into a multi-purpose cooperative with various services, including lending, savings and time deposits, lodging, and consumers operations (Cooperative Development Authority (CDA), 2014). The cooperative has received various awards during its 42 years of existence and is categorised as one of the most successful cooperatives in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR).

2. Reinvigorating cultural values, ethics and sense of responsibility in the concepts of *sigid/mayat* (the good and right), *lawa* (the bad), *inayan* and *paniyew* (cultural taboos, the unethical)

The concepts of *mayat/sigid* (what is good and right), *lawa* (the bad), and *inayan* and *paniyew* (cultural taboos, the ‘unethical’), are values that can be translated as unwritten guidelines to

maintain harmonious living with fellow human beings, ancestors, and all other living beings and the environment (Bakun Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development Protection Plan (ADSDPP), cited in Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resources Management Project (CHARMP), 2004, p. 50). These customary guidelines served as important foundations in maintaining harmony within the early Igorot community, and were communicated through the traditional ways of oral and experiential learning (C. Fermin, personal communication, 13 May 2009).

The concepts of good and bad (*mayat, lawa*), and respect and discipline (*inayan, paniyew/pijew*), are the unwritten rules that inform community life and relationships. In building organisations, community organisers shared that it helps to let the community review and walk through their traditional ancestral values, ethics, and forms of discipline (Fiar-od, 2002). In this way, they can decide which ones would work to integrate as part of their organisational operation:

On the part of community development workers, it is important to understand by heart the culture of the people and be guided by the traditional values, ethics and discipline. In this job, journeying with the people in the communities can at times become part of your personal life. From time to time, we need to have check and balance through debriefing, group reflection, project monitoring and evaluation (A. Macay, personal communication, 10 February 2013)

For Bernadette, their cooperative continues to survive and grow because of the community elders' guidance and emphasis on the traditional value of *inayan*. This serves as a constant reminder to the cooperative officers to keep the peoples' trust by managing the members' money 'properly'. Bernadette also claims that, personally, it was because of the values taught by the elders to her since childhood that she was able to develop and strengthen her leadership in their community cooperative despite her lack of formal education (not finishing a college degree) (B. Willie, personal communication, 22 March 2009).

Aside from cooperative building, the Cordillera Volunteers Movement (CVM), an organisation of community organisers in the Cordillera Region, and the Ubod-Apunan Association for Healthy Living (UBAPAS), a community health association located in Kapangan, Benguet, claim to have also utilised traditional values in organising. The concepts of *mayat* and *lawa*, *inayan* and *paniyew* are especially useful in facilitating vision, mission, goals and planning in a community organisation. Officers and members can commit to their roles, tasks and functions in the group because they are working not only for themselves, but more importantly, to promote development in their *ili*. UBAPAS employs a 'chain organising' strategy in its work on community health in Kapangan. According to the Program Coordinator, Aida Dingle, UBAPAS was the first village-based PO that was organised in the area in the late 1990s that is run by community health workers and mothers. UBAPAS' programs include the revival of traditional alternative health practices and services in the community. Starting in the early 2000s, the trained officers and members of UBAPAS started replicating their projects and programs in other remote villages in Kapangan. As of 2015, four more village-based alternative health organisations were established because of the 'chain organising' approach (A. Dingle, personal communication, 14 November 2016).

CVM on the other hand, emphasises to community organisations the value of not only bringing development, but more importantly, learning to assert Indigenous rights and to protect the *ili* from inappropriate 'development' interventions. The *ili* is where every Igorot belongs, it is the source of one's identity and direction, and the place they will always go back to. For CVM, it is important to closely assess projects and programs coming in to the community from outside agencies as to whether they really serve the needs of the *ili*:

When a project is about to come to our community, we need to ask ourselves: will it give life and sustainability to the ili? We do not just say “yes” to a project because it has funding. We need to critically analyse its relevance and possible impact in our community (P. Abluyen, personal communication, 10 February 2009)

3. Honouring relevant customary laws and the application of traditional decision making in *tongtong/tabataval/ngalat*

The oldest justice institution in the Igorot *ili* is the council of elders, considered to be the holders of wisdom and serving as respected guides in decision-making and justice (Bakun ADSDPP, cited in CHARMP, 2004, p. 50). One of the most recognised practices, and one of the first to be documented by anthropologists, is the process of decision making and conflict resolution in Benguet called the *tongtong*, *tabtaval* or *ngalat* (Keesing, 1962; Moss, 1920). Igorots highly recognise the leadership of elders with wisdom, called *enemneman* or *nanemneman* (Cabato, 2011; Keesing, 1962) or *lallakay* (Barnes & Magdalena, 2015), because of their life experience and knowledge of the traditions and life's 'truths', and they serve as guides in enforcing the Igorot unwritten and sacred customary laws (Moss, 1920). The recognition of the validity of the use of *tongtong* in conflict resolution at the community level is being advocated by the supporters of Indigenous Peoples Rights Acts (B. Yano, personal communication, 10 February 2009). Today, the attempt to institutionalise *tongtong* in local governance can be seen in *barangay* (village) leadership where a group of elders called '*Lupong Tagapamayapa*', or simply '*Lupon*', is established. They serve as the first point of contact to help resolve issues or conflicts in the community. *Lupon* is a formal body at the *barangay* level administration (Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), 2012; Barnes & Magdalena, 2015). AIPP advocates engagement of elders in governance from the community to national levels.

In organising new community associations or POs, the community workers shared that they encourage the participation of elders as either officers or advisers of the group. They also incorporate customary practices and rituals in project activities. Elders have important roles in guiding POs in cases where they have issues or important decisions to make related to program or project management and implementation (A. Dingle, personal communication, 12 April 2013). Aida shared a common concern however, that with modernity and changes in the lives of Igorot communities, the number of traditional elders in the community is becoming less and less.

Potential and challenges of the *ili* concept of organising

Despite resistance to some aspects of globalisation and modern development, it is inevitable that previously isolated groups who have been 'away from modernisation', such as Indigenous Peoples, now engage in international contact, establish relationships and networks, and eventually become trans local in space and place (Allard, 2016; McKay, 2006). The concept of translocal and transnational modes of cultural reproduction proposes a dynamic and continually evolving view and experience of the global world through transgression of boundaries between spaces of very different scale and type, as well as through the re-creation of local distinctions between those spaces (Freitag & Oppen, 2010, p. 6). It has been observed that migration has given Indigenous Peoples access to global exploration and connection, resulting in redefining their Indigenous image and identity through technology and social media (Botangen et al., 2017; Longboan, 2009). As Igorots continue to move and interact in different parts of the world, studies show that they work towards making meaning of their culture of origin in the new space they are in. For example, stories shared by Igorot immigrants in the book *Two Homes for One Heart: Igorot Immigration Stories* (Adonis, 2017) unravels the longing to re-create the Igorot *ili* overseas. Hence, Igorot community groups are organised under the umbrella of Igorot Global Organization (IGO) and BIBAK (Adonis, 2017; Longboan, 2009). These groups organise purposely to support one another and create an imagined Igorot

ili space in their 'new home'. They regularly conduct cultural camps and gatherings to celebrate and strengthen their Igorot identity away from their homeland (Bete, cited in Adonis, 2017, p. 128-130). This demonstrates that the *ili* concept and its application is open and flexible to various space and place for Igorots who have a strong foundation of the concept.

On the other hand, migration and access to technological advancements and social media also influence and motivate the evolution of culture, which leads to the unavoidable loss of some of the Indigenous traditional values and practices. As Igorots attempt to operate in two worlds - the mainstream and the traditional *ili* - it can be assumed that the birth of a new culture seems inevitable (Marcelo, 2014). Participants in this study express the concern that the *ili* concept might not find relevance to Igorots who have not fully imbibed the culture; those who are more exposed to diversity and modernity rather than traditional values; and those who have no opportunity of utilising cultural skills alongside modernity. There was an expressed concern that a lack of cultural grounding could lead to 'identity confusion' (N. Caoili, personal communication, 10 May 2009). It remains a large task for Igorots to rejuvenate both in themselves and in their communities the *ili* concept, values and practices in order to develop a clear standpoint on their 'Indigeneity' as they traverse translocal spaces and participate in mainstream development models and practices.

While the potential of *ili*-based organising is promising, it is, at this point, not widely implemented. This concept therefore needs more aggressive and broader advocacy support for it to be known and adapted by more community development agencies.

Conclusion

This paper presented the *ili*-based organising concept and its application in community development programs, specifically in working with Igorot Indigenous communities in Benguet, Philippines, as emanating from their experience of colonisation and development. In order to show respect and privilege the Igorot participants' voice and wisdom in this study, the researchers employed Indigenous research methodology, contextualised in the life experience of the search for wisdom of the Igorot Indigenous Peoples. The paper proposed three ways of utilising the *ili*-based concept in community development work. These are: incorporating traditional practices of working together through *alluyon*, *binnadang* and *ub-ubbo* in a community organisation; reinvigorating cultural values and sense of responsibility through the concepts of *sigid* and *mayat* (*the good and right*), *lawa* (*the bad*), and *inayan* and *paniyew* (*taboo, the unethical*); and lastly, honoring relevant customary laws and the application of traditional decision making as a guide in program and project development and implementation. We argue that the source of empowerment for Igorot individuals and communities is to connect them back to their concept of home, the *ili*. The discussion in this paper demonstrated that Igorot Peoples' traditional values, concepts and practices are assets to community organising work, with its integration with contemporary strategies and approaches. The utilisation of cultural values also strengthens participation, inner sense of commitment and responsibility among project partners. *Ili*-based community organising is not only a way of promoting a participatory approach, but also privileging Indigenous Peoples as active contributors to community development.

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Biographical Notes

Digna Adonis is an Igorot woman from Benguet, Philippines and the founder and the current coordinator of *Indigenous Learning Institute (ILI)*, a small non-profit organisation that mobilises Igorot young people in preserving and utilising the strengths of their cultural values and traditions to create positive impact for themselves, their fellow youth and their respective communities. Prior to her involvement in Igorot culture and language revitalisation, Digna worked in the areas of teaching, research, and community development in the Philippines, Australia, and South Korea.

Jen Couch is senior lecturer in youth work and coordinator of the youth work and international development degree. Jen came to Australian Catholic University 15 years ago after working extensively in the youth and community sectors in Australia and South Asia. She has established a national reputation for her work in the area of refugee young people and resettlement, and has recently completed the first longitudinal ethnographic study to explore refugee young people and homelessness in Australia. Jen has worked with, and on behalf of, young people in the areas of refugee settlement, displacement, homelessness, rights and participation, torture and trauma, and capacity building. She has published widely in the area of young people and marginalisation and is particularly interested in working in hopeful and

positive ways to change social inequalities and exclusion. Her current research is focused on youth work in conflict zones, decolonizing youth work practice and embedding Southern Theory into pedagogy.