

Increasing Community Participation through Public Space And Policy Intervention: A Case Study On The Dap-Ayan System Of Pinili, Ilocos Norte, Philippines¹

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ABSTRACT

In the Philippines, particularly in some rural areas, a particular town is composed of various barangays[village] and these are politically and geographically subdivided into various puroks[this refers to zone, sub-barangay or neighborhood]. Each purok has their purok centers or dap-ayan which is a simple structure built in strategic place within the neighborhood. Each dap-ayan is usually headed by one or two barangay officials who are in-charge of the particular purok. In this regard, the members of the purok use their own resources in building, decorating and maintaining the beauty of their own dap-ayan. This research aimed at looking at the efficiency of the dap-ayan in the development process of a community. It is hoped to further analyze the use of the dap-ayan as a public space strengthened by a policy and how this has affected the community particularly in issues of community participation. The findings of the study showed that the common activities done in the dap-ayan include barangay meetings, purok meetings, dispute settlements and “The Clean and Green Program”. Some of the informants perceived that consultations in the dap-ayan are more effective since people get to have the chance to really discuss the different issues that they encounter within their purok. It is also notable that the dap-ayan has been serving as a mini “Hall of Justice” where minor issues like family feuds and small arguments are already settled in the dap-ayan. The “Clean and Green Program” is an annual competition of the municipality and the institutionalization of the dap-ayan has even made a tougher competition on the clean and green project. People’s group initiative on making their own dap-ayan beautiful has become a manifestation that people’s participation was greatly encouraged. It is then opined that due to the institutionalization and activities in the dap-ayan, people’s participation in community development has been greatly encouraged. This also implies that public spaces within the community can be maximized to improve people’s participation.

Keywords: *Community participation, policy, public space, self-governance*

Introduction

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United Nations defines community development as a process by which the efforts of the people are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of these communities into the life of a nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress (Kishindo, 2000). Basing from its definition, community development as a field of practice requires great participation from the community members and a good relationship with the people who are in authority.

In the Philippines, the system of governance is arranged from national, regional, municipal, barangay, and, in some areas, sitio or purok. This study looked at the town of Pinili and the researcher analyzed the interplay between local governance and public space in this town that has contributed to an enhanced participation among community members.

A particular town, like Pinili, is composed of various *barangays* and each *barangay* is politically and geographically subdivided into various *puroks*. Each *purok* has its own *purok* centers or *dap-ayan* which is a simple structure built in strategic place within the area. Each *dap-ayan* is headed by one barangay councilor [*kagawad*] who is in-charge of the particular the neighborhood's administrative activities. In connection to this, the members of the *purok* use their own resources in building, decorating and maintaining the beauty of their own *dap-ayan*. Most *dap-ayans* are structures that are made of bamboos and resemble the structure of a bamboo hut.

This *dap-ayan* system formed part of the cultural practices by various towns in Ilocos Norte; however, as political structures became more formal, the use of *dap-ayan* has been reduced. In the past, some people have been considering the *dap-ayan* as chatting [*pagtutungtungan*] or drinking [*paggi-inuman*] place and other uses were not noticed. As such, the Pinili Local Government Unit passed Resolution Number 070-9598 in 1995 institutionalizing *dap-ayans* as permanent *purok* centers for development and progress. In other words, the resolution declared the *dap-ayans* as formal structures. This was done in order to increase community participation since people are considered to have been living their own lives now, which means that they do not have much time to participate in the government or community activities (DILG, 2001). Only the town of Pinili has made a resolution which institutionalized the *dap-ayan* with the aim of bringing closer relationship among community members leading to increased community participation.

This paper looks at the interplay between public space and policy intervention in community development. Sociologically, it has been known that public spaces serve as one of the major contributors to the increased participation among various members of the society. Grodach (2010), in his study about public spaces, said that “an analysis of the public space characteristics is useful because it encourages consideration of sometimes overlooked issues, particularly the effect of the physical environment on outcomes related to community development.”



Figure 1: Photo of a *dap-ayan* in Barangay Sto. Tomas, Pinili, Ilocos Norte (February 2011)

The main goal of this research was to look at the role of the *dap-ayan* system in the development of a community particularly in the town of Pinili in Ilocos Norte. This banked on the speculations that the *dap-ayan*, through the different activities done in this structure, draws the community closer to each other. Concomitant with this, this research had the following specific objectives:

1. To characterize the different social activities undertaken in the *dap-ayan*;
2. To identify laws and policies enacted for the operation of the *dap-ayan*;
3. To know the role of the *dap-ayan* in increasing community participation in the town of Pinili;
4. To identify problems encountered by the *purok* in the operation of the *dap-ayan*

The data used were taken from the interviews from the *purok* officials from the different *barangays* of Pinili, Ilocos Norte. They were chosen for the interviews since they are more knowledgeable in managing their own *dap-ayans*. Moreover, the Municipal Planning and Development Officer in the municipality was also interviewed regarding the institutionalization and over-all implementation of this *dap-ayan* as a municipal ordinance. Some literatures regarding the *dap-ayan* were also used particularly from the Department of Interior and Local Government.

Characterization of the Dap-Ayan

Design and Location

“Mushroom-shaped ti dadduma, adda met ti daytay, kanya-kanyang design ti dap-ayan.” (Most are mushroom-shaped, but others have their own designs as well.)

Originally, according to some residents, the shape of the *dap-ayan* is mushroom-shaped and it uses *pan-aw* or *anahaw* leaves as its roof. The entire structure can be compared to a small hut. The chairs are made of bamboo and it is usually hexagonal in shape. Moreover, originally, there were no fixed dimensions of the structure and people build the *dap-ayan* depending on the available area (See Plate I).

However, after the institutionalization of the *dap-ayan*, people have become more innovative with the design and structure. Some *dap-ayans* are now also wood or concrete in the construction of *dap-ayan*, including its chairs.

Aside from the changes in the materials used and structure, *purok* members have also included various features of the *dap-ayan* such as cabinets, public restrooms (Plate II), and a garden. Moreover, a fence is also built around the *dap-ayan* to prevent some animals from destroying the plants that were planted around it. This beautification and variations in its design has been influenced by the annual competition that the municipality is conducting in relation to the best *dap-ayan* in the entire town. Aside from this, after the institutionalization of the *dap-ayan*, it was agreed that the *dap-ayan* should now have an area of at least 5 square meters including the fence. Moreover, according to some informants, in some cases, they also need to submit to the municipal local government unit the plan of the *dap-ayan* that is needed to be constructed for the first time.

The location of the *dap-ayan* is dependent on two factors. First, it is highly dependent on the available lot or space. Secondly, the *dap-ayan*, nevertheless, should also be situated in a strategic location which is near the houses of the *purok* members or at least majority of the members are in proximity to the *dap-ayan*. It should also be seen by the majority of the *purok*

members for easier management and to encourage more *purok* members to stay in the *dap-ayan*, which would later on, encourage more participation among the members.

Fund Source for the Construction of Dap-Ayan

The construction of the *dap-ayan* and the sources of the materials used are all from the initiative of the *purok* members. Most materials are readily available in the area.

All the informants mentioned that most of the needed materials in the construction of the *dap-ayan* are from the community members. The quantity of the bamboo they will bring, for instance, also depends on each member. On the other hand, some community members can also be generous enough to donate other materials needed to be bought such as nails and paints. *Purok* members also bring some plants and these are used as decoration. The plants, on the other hand, are the responsibility of the women.

Purok Sais in Barangay Buanga has a revolving fund which also serves as their source of funds for the renovation of their *dap-ayan*. The *purok* members will still bring some of the materials needed, but they use the fund for buying other things needed. In this case, the barangay official (or *barangay kagawad*) for the *purok* is not “obliged” to shell out some money on his pocket. However, this is only one case. In most cases, the barangay kagawads also shell out some amount from their own pockets in order to provide the *dap-ayan* with the other materials needed for the construction. Some things included in their expenses are the snacks of the members who are working for the construction of *dap-ayan*.



Figure 2: Photo of the *purok* members renovating their *dap-ayan* and building other facilities around the *dap-ayan*. (January 2011)

Activities Undertaken

Public space has been considered as an open space which means that this place is publicly owned and any member of the community can go there (Tonnelat, 2008). Moreover, public space is also regarded as having various significant roles in the cultural, social and political functions for the community (Orum and Neal, 2010). The *dap-ayan* can, thus, be considered as a public space since it qualifies the two aforementioned definitions.

The *dap-ayan* already exists in some *barangays* in the town of Pinili even before its institutionalization in 1995. However, the problem was that not all *barangays* have *dap-ayans* and the activities there were not properly identified. It was only considered as a resting place

[*paginanaan*], a gambling area, and an area for settling inter-family disputes [*pagsasaritaan*]. The local government officials saw how the *dap-ayan* can be maximized, especially on the implementation of various projects; they have institutionalized it in 1995. After the institutionalization, the uses of the *dap-ayan* have been set and it turned out to be a more functional space within the *purok*.

Consultations and meetings. According to some informants, most *barangays* conduct their general assembly at least twice a year. For some, they conduct it quarterly. On the other hand, consultations and meetings within the *purok* are conducted on a more regular basis. This is usually scheduled on Sundays as it is deemed the most convenient time for most members. Some *barangays* formally conduct their *purok* meetings at least once a month while some have their meetings on a more irregular and informal manner. This is because some community members take a nap in the *dap-ayan* after lunch or before dinner. In this case, they already discuss about some issues that are needed to be discussed within the *purok*. With these meetings, immediate needs are discussed.

Inter-family dispute settlements. One of the main functions of the *dap-ayan* is in solving various issues within the *purok* especially inter-family disputes. The types of cases solved here include simple family feuds, quarrels and other “light” issues. Other more serious cases are discussed at the *barangay* level where they will now decide which should be filed at the higher courts.

The *barangay kagawad* in-charge of the *purok* is usually the mediator. In some cases, he is assisted by the members of the *lupon* [*barangay peacemakers*] who are members of the *purok*. At the same time, the presence of *barangay* captain in the dispute settlement is not really needed, in most cases, unless requested by any of the parties involved.

As stated in the RA 7160, The Revised Local Government Code of the Philippines, the indigenous forms of dispute settlement or resolution shall be honored. The *dap-ayan* has created a counterpart of the *Lupong Tagapamayapa* [*barangay peacemakers*] stated in the Local Government Code of 1991, and they have called it as *Lupong Tagapagkasundo* [group of *barangay* mediators], which is, of course, headed by the *barangay kagawad* [*barangay councilor*]. Contrastingly, there were really no trainings given to the *barangay kagawads* regarding the proper way of handling various disputes and they simply believe that any person can be a mediator in any dispute settlement issues. In the past, the elderly used to be the mediators for a particular dispute especially if these are simple inter-family disputes. However, the *kagawad* now plays a great role in the mediation or dispute settlement process.

“ SEC. 384. Role of the Barangay. - As the basic political unit, the barangay serves as the primary planning and implementing unit of government policies, plans, programs, projects, and activities in the community, and as a forum wherein the collective views of the people may be expressed, crystallized and considered, and where disputes may be amicably settled.

SEC. 399. Lupong Tagapamayapa. - (a) There is hereby created in each barangay a lupong tagapamayapa, hereinafter referred to as the lupon, composed of the punong barangay as chairman and ten (10) to twenty (20) members. The lupon shall be constituted every three (3) years in the manner provided herein.” (<http://www.chanrobles.com/localgov3.htm>)

Thus far, in the resolution of inter-family disputes, nine out of ten conflicts in the *barangays* were resolved at the *purok* level, as stated in the *Galing Pook* Evaluation of the Department of Interior and Local Government. According to the respondents, the unresolved

cases in the *purok* level are usually the cases where the involving parties opt to have it resolved at the *barangay* level through the *Lupong Tagapamayapa*.

Livelihood activities and trainings. Given that the *dap-ayan*'s location is very near the houses of the *purok* members, this place has also served as a gathering area for people during various trainings offered by various organizations. One of the most common trainings conducted are for livelihood trainings such as cosmetology or gardening. However, not all the *barangays* have had livelihood trainings. In most cases, it is the initiative of the *barangay* council to organize some training for his own *purok* members. Only three of the informants mentioned about some trainings that were conducted in their respective *puroks*.

In some of their responses, it appeared that the *dap-ayan* serves as a venue for some seminars. These seminars include family planning and waste management seminars. Moreover, these aforementioned seminars can be in line with the activities of the Municipal Population Program Office wherein they conduct reproductive health seminars, gender sensitivity trainings, food processing and women's forums in different *barangays* of the municipality.

Social gatherings. The *dap-ayan* also serves as an area where people can stay during special occasions or the *purok* members can also organize some activities or events for their *purok*. One of the common occasions is what the community calls as *padaya* (feast), where an important occasion is to be held and many visitors are expected to attend the feast.

Various social gatherings of the *purok* members also contribute in strengthening the relationships of *purok* members. For instance, Christmas program of the *purok* is held in the *dap-ayan* and this occasion gives the members a chance to enjoy and share each other's blessings. The funds used for this event are dependent on the initiative of the *purok* members. In some cases, the funds are taken from the solicitations given by the *balikbayans* (locals returning home for vacation from other countries) within the *purok*, or in some cases, voluntary contributions by the *purok* members are also common. In most cases, the decision to have such activity is also the decision of the *purok* members. Organizing these activities are not required by the government, but these are initiatives of the *purok* members especially the *purok* officers.

Basing from the interviews, not all the *dap-ayans* organize social gatherings such as Christmas programs. In the previous year (2011), only two of the informants said that their respective *puroks* has organized a Christmas program which allowed the members to celebrate and interact with each other. The decision to conduct various social gatherings is dependent on the initiatives of the *pumurok* especially the *barangay* kagawad. Taking for instance *Purok Sais* in *Barangay Buanga*, the fund used in their Christmas program was taken from their revolving fund and some contributions from its members.

In some cases, the *dap-ayan* also serves as *pagbisitaan ti pumurok* where the visitors from the local government unit or other visitors of the *purok* can stay. For instance, the municipal government officials (collectors) sometimes go to the different *barangays* to collect *milyar* (land taxes) and the collectors often stay in the *dap-ayan* and the people can just go there to pay.

Aside from these, some religious activities are also conducted in the *dap-ayan* especially when some priests or pastors conduct religious activities in the *purok*. Pastors and priests can go to the *dap-ayan* and conduct their religious activities for the community members there.

Barangay Tanod Outpost. The *dap-ayan* is located in places near the houses of majority of the *purok* members or along the streets. According to some informants, in most situations, the *barangay tanods* (*barangay* police) who patrol at night use the *dap-ayan* as

their outpost. In this way, it is considered that it would be easier for them to check and ensure the safety within the *purok*. According to them, a particular *dap-ayan* does not really need to have a *tanod* to ensure of the community's safety. In some cases, it is the members themselves who volunteer to secure the safety of their own *purok* by staying in the *dap-ayan*. Moreover, some *purok* members prefer to have the *dap-ayan* as *pagtutungtungan* (place for chatting) even at night, which allows them to check the security within their community even in the evening.

Medicinal/vegetable crop production. In line with the beautification projects of the *purok* especially the *dap-ayan*, some *puroks* have also maximized the spaces in their *dap-ayan* by planting some seedlings to make a vegetable garden or a medicinal garden. Medicinal gardens and vegetable gardens are considered as ideal part of the *dap-ayan*. Medicinal plants are also planted so that the members of the community can freely get some plants that they need. The medicinal garden is usually situated beside other ornamental plants that are planted around the *dap-ayan*. In this case, these do not only serve as medicinal plants but also for aesthetic purposes.

The plants in the *dap-ayan* were all donations from the community members. Every member of the *purok* can donate whatever plant is deemed necessary to be put in the *dap-ayan*. Taking care of these plants around the *dap-ayan* are either scheduled or voluntarily. For some *dap-ayans*, taking care of the plants which usually includes weeding and watering them, is scheduled. The *purok* members make a schedule depending on their available time. For other *dap-ayans*, cleaning the *dap-ayan* including watering the plants can be voluntarily handled by the *purok* members who are in the vicinity of the *dap-ayan* which is almost part of their *paraangan* (lawn).

Education and recreation. One of the things that the judges also check during the *dap-ayan* competition is the other features of the *dap-ayan*. In this case, most *dap-ayans* also have their own cabinets where some books or first aid kits are stored. These features were built as it aimed at catering the immediate needs of the *purok* members including the children.

The *dap-ayan* serves as a reading center for children especially if there are some organizations willing to teach in the area during weekends. The reading center also aimed at helping the adult members of the community who were unable to read and write to learn the basics of reading and writing. This is in line with the statement mentioned in the municipal ordinance.

The *dap-ayan* as a place for *pagtutungtungan*, *paginanaan* is considered as one of the "traditional" or common uses of the *dap-ayan* even before it was institutionalized. Given the physical structure of the *dap-ayan*, an open area and uses *pan-aw* as its roof, the place is cooler than staying inside the houses (*pagpalammissan*). At this point, while sitting in the place, they can also feel relaxed while simply chatting with the other people who are there.

Some *dap-ayans* also create some playgrounds, so that there is a space where children can also play. Most of the materials used in making the playground are also indigenous materials which are readily available within the community.

Law/Policy Enacted For the Operation of the Dap-Ayans

Resolution Number 070-9598 Series of 1995

On October 30, 1995, a municipal ordinance institutionalizing the *dap-ayan* was passed by the Sanguniang Bayan members of Pinili, Ilocos Norte. The Resolution Number 070-9598 Series of 1995, entitled "Resolution Institutionalizing Dap-ayans as Permanent Purok Centers for

Development and Progress in the 25 Barangays of the Municipality of Pinili, Ilocos Norte.” Based on the copy of the ordinance, the local government unit expected that the *dap-ayan* could serve as a venue where people can be empowered by allowing them to govern themselves through the *dap-ayan*. Moreover, it recognizes the practice of the *purok* on democracy at the grassroots level.

The *dap-ayan* already exists in some municipalities in Ilocos Norte including the town of Pinili. One informant mentioned that the *dap-ayan* was seen as a good method for people to participate and cooperate with the activities of the town. The *dap-ayan* was institutionalized in order to guide the people on how to use this structure properly and to make the people feel that they have the responsibility over their own communities since, before it was institutionalized, the local government felt that there was a little participation among people as manifested by the peace and security within the community.

This was similar to the response of one informant who mentioned that the *dap-ayan* was strengthened by the ordinance because people could not really see the *dap-ayan* as a significant structure. Most people used to consider the *dap-ayan* only as a physical structure, and these structures were not also maintained very well. Compared with the past, the *dap-ayans*, at present, are now renovated and its roles are now redefined annually and are maintained the whole year.

Number of dap-ayans. The excerpt from the ordinance, it clearly mentions the number of *dap-ayans* that should be built in every barangay.

“WHEREAS, every barangay of the Municipality of Pinili, Ilocos Norte has seven *dap-ayans* in the seven *puroks* under the seven barangay Kagawads of the barangay” (Municipal Resolution No. 070-9598 Series of 1995)

It says that one barangay should have seven *dap-ayans* which would be handled by every barangay Kagawad. Moreover, this also means that one *purok* should have their respective *dap-ayans*. In an interview with some informants, they have mentioned that before the *dap-ayan* ordinance was passed, the number of *dap-ayans* in every *barangay* were not definite. Before 1995, one of the informants mentioned that their *barangay* had only five *dap-ayans* whereas some have only two or three. In this regard, the institutionalization has clearly defined the number of *dap-ayans* and the construction of the *dap-ayan* was clearly delegated to be the initiative of the *barangay* council particularly the *barangay kagawads*, with the assistance of the *barangay captain*.

Activities undertaken in the *dap-ayan*. It was mentioned by some informants that not all barangays before have a clear number of *dap-ayan* and this was usually used as *paginanaan* (a place to rest) and *pagtutungtungan* (a place to chat) only. In connection to this, these activities have become part of the *dap-ayan* only after this resolution was passed. The integration of the *dap-ayan* as a formal structure also paved way to an increase in the number of activities undertaken..

“WHEREAS, every *Dap-ayan* has become the center of programs and activities of the *purok*; *purok* meetings/conferences, *purok* library and reading center, *purok* NFE learning resource center, *purok* data information center, *purok* herbal garden and *purok* planning center;” (Municipal Resolution No. 070-9598 Series of 1995)

Participation at the Grassroots Level. The *dap-ayan* is managed by the *purok* officers because the *dap-ayan* ordinance has also required each *purok* to have a set of officers who would help the *barangay kagawad* in leading the implementation of various projects and activities of the *purok*. The members are chosen by all *purok* members and the lengths of their terms are also dependent on the decisions of the members. In most cases, according to the informants, the people who were elected or chosen as heads of the *purok* remained the same for quite a long period already since the *purok* members feel that they are quite doing well. In the *dap-ayan* ordinance, this set of officials is clearly stated:

“WHEREAS, the people of the *purok* have duly elected the officials of their own *purok* thereby exercising democracy at the grassroots level”
(Municipal Resolution No. 070-9598 Series of 1995)

The officials of the *dap-ayan* are comprised of: (1) President, (2) Vice-President, (3) Secretary, (4) Treasurer, (5) Auditor, (6) P.I.O. and the (7) Adviser- who is the *barangay kagawad*. The numbers of households per *purok* are usually from 10 to 15 households and one representative from each household is expected to attend meetings.

Furthermore, the laws and policies regarding the proper use of *dap-ayan* also vary from one another. The most common rule set is not to use the *dap-ayan* as a gambling area or as a drinking area since this limits the number of people who can freely go to there. However, in some cases, drinking in the *dap-ayan* can be permitted for particular occasions as long as majority of the *purok* members have agreed on it. It is the responsibility of the *purok* officers and the *barangay kagawad* to set rules and activities for their respective *dap-ayans*; however, the *purok* members should agree with these decisions as well. With this ordinance, the Municipal Local Government Unit of Pinili expected that the *dap-ayan* will serve as the medium for teamwork of the people.

Increased Community Participation As Influenced By the Dap-Ayan

Construction/Renovation of Dap-Ayan

The construction and renovation of *dap-ayan* before the institutionalization was completely the initiative of the community members who want to have a *purok* center or a place where people can gather and chat. However, after the institutionalization, the number of *dap-ayans* for every *barangay* was set to seven representing every *purok* or zone and each was handled by every *kagawad*. In this regard, more *purok* members have participated in the construction because they have also wanted to see that their area has a particular *purok* center like what other areas were doing. After the institutionalization, all members have been participating through the leadership of the *barangay kagawad* assigned for every *purok*.

The materials used in the construction of the *dap-ayan* are voluntarily given by the community members. All the informants said the materials are brought by the community members, except for some materials that are really needed to be bought such as nails and wires. The most common situation is that one each household can bring few pieces of bamboo and *pan-aw* [common grass/sans grass] which is needed for the roof. Moreover, the nails can be bought by the *barangay kagawad*, or in some cases, one household can volunteer to buy some nails that are needed in the construction.

Furthermore, given that the every *purok* has only a limited number of members,

organizing these people for the construction of the *dap-ayan* was not an issue. First, considering that most members of the community are farmers, these people do not really have a fixed schedule on the things that they need to do. As a result, coming up with a consensus regarding the schedules for *purok* activities became easier since only few members are needed to be considered and consulted before coming up with a common decision. For instance, deciding on when to renovate or improve the *dap-ayan* can be dependent on the available and agreed schedule among the *purok* members. This situation has greatly encouraged the community members to join in the activities such as construction of the *dap-ayan*. In most cases, at least one representative for every household helps in the construction, but some *purok* members who are willing to help can also go there.

This contribution of materials and labor in the construction and beautification of the *dap-ayan* implies a certain level of participation among the members of the *purok*. The voluntary act of constructing their respective *dap-ayans* shows the initiative of the members of the *purok* to build a structure that really represents their community or their organization as a community. The people talk with each other and discuss the things that could be done to really improve their *dap-ayan*.

While the *purok* members are constructing or renovating the *dap-ayan*, they already get the chance to talk with each other different things that may seem interesting for them. These simple conversations can already be considered as a form of social interaction among them which may improve their relationships especially that the construction of the *dap-ayan* does not take only one day, but it can take one week or two. Moreover, this also allows them to practice their creativity and to make decisions democratically especially when they try to decide on the design of the *dap-ayan*.

Best Dap-Ayan Contest/Clean and Green Contest

The "Best in Dap-ayan" contest in the Municipality of Pinili, Ilocos Norte only started after the *dap-ayan* was institutionalized. This is an annual competition that is part of the municipality's annual fiesta. The aim of this is to make sure that every *purok* has constructed their *dap-ayan* and to see the initiative of the people as well. This "Best in Dap-ayan" contest has also created an increased participation since people feel the desire to win and they try to help each other to make their *dap-ayan* one of the best each year.

This competition has no clear criteria, but various things are taken into consideration. According to the Municipal Planning and Development Officer, who is one of the judges for the Best in Dap-ayan competition, the budget is considered as one of the important considerations. According to her, a very expensive *dap-ayan* may not be very good. In this regard, they usually ask the *purok* members to explain the source of funding that they have used in the construction. The judges are expecting that the construction is the result of *bayanihan* (*group effort*) where people donate the resources that they have.

Other criteria for this competition should be the creativity of the *purok* members to design their own *dap-ayan*. As what has been mentioned in the earlier discussions, the *dap-ayan* used to be a mushroom-shaped structure only and it is usually hexagonal in shape. However, at present, various *puroks* have made their own designs as this signifies the creativity and collaborative efforts of the members. This initiative of the community members to create and design their *dap-ayan* also encourages them to participate more in the *purok* activities.

This kind of competition has made the people to participate more because this gives them the sense of belongingness every time they win the competition since their efforts have

been paid off. In addition, the visits of the local government officials to check the *dap-ayans* make them transparent to the local people and this allows the community members to be more active in the other government activities.

Moreover, this has paved way for the town of Pinili, to be consistently chosen as the cleanest and greenest municipality in the province. This competition has also given initiatives among the members to continually maintain the cleanliness and beauty of their *dap-ayan*. At the same time, this competition has encouraged the community members to continuously develop and renovate their *dap-ayans*, so that they will have more chances of winning this competition. The goal of the municipal local government to make the *dap-ayan* a place for people to practice self-governance is also being met since it is the people's initiative that usually makes them work together in making their *dap-ayan* the best in the entire municipality. The price given to the winners of the *dap-ayan* usually serves as a *purok* fund, and the *purok* members are given their own capacity to decide on how they will use the money.

Consultations and Meetings

Mobilizing and organizing the community members to attend meetings can be one difficult task for barangay officials. As what has been mentioned above, barangay meetings are conducted only once or twice a month, and *barangay* officials also have regular sessions. The conduct of *purok* meetings has given the citizens to have more chances to discuss matters that directly affect them especially on their own *puroks* or zones.

According to some informants, the *barangay* assembly, which is held in their *barangay* basketball court or in the *barangay* hall, was deemed significant since people can get to understand the situation of other *puroks* and the issues of the *barangay* can be better discussed as people from different zones can really express their ideas and more people can listen to it. However, the *purok* meetings were also considered as very good for two reasons. One is that it saves some time for the people since they will not need to attend some meetings regularly and they will not need to go to the *barangay* hall which may be far from their respective areas. Moreover, the *purok* meetings also allow the members of the *purok* to discuss more in detail the issues within their community. In most cases, a 100% attendance is noted in the *purok* meetings.

Following Tonnelat's qualifications for a public space, the *dap-ayan* also serves as an area of debate particularly on the "practice of democracy and other political actions" that may involve its people. The number of members within the *purok* is lesser compared with the entire *barangay* and this makes it easier for the members to join together as a group and discuss various issues that needs discussion. Furthermore, given that the *purok* members are close *kins* or consider each member as relatives, the members may feel easier to express the ideas that may concern them. In relation to these, the *dap-ayan*, being a public space, is an "accessible area" which is a good venue where people usually meet each other to discuss various issues that may affect them.

However, it can also be noted that the some members of the *purok* still prefer to have a *barangay* assembly where all members of the *barangay* will join together as a group to discuss the larger issues that may affect them, their *barangay* and their locality as a whole. The common reason that they have given is that it would give them the opportunity to really learn and understand the situations or concerns of other citizens in their *barangay*. For them, *barangay* assemblies still serve as a better venue for the community members to see a more

holistic view on the different concerns and problems of their *barangay*. In this way, each *purok* also has the chance to learn from the situation of the other *puroks* in their *barangay*.

Green and Haines (2002) also mentioned that one issue in communication is that vague method of communication exists between the community members and the heads of a particular community. In the case of the *dap-ayan*, two forms of communication exist. One is the *purok* meeting and the other is the house to house communication. In *purok* meetings, it is a general assembly where all the members, or at least one member from each household, can attend and express their opinions and ideas regarding the different issues that are needed to be discussed. These issues concern the entire *purok* or even the entire *barangay*. In this case, since there is only few number of people in the meeting, and the relationships among the members are tightly knit, all members can have their chance to express their concerns and ideas. Such concerns are discussed by all the members of the entire *purok* as well. In this way, people can feel that they can express their ideas and that the people in authority are really looking at their concerns.

In some cases, people do not need to go to *barangay* meetings or *purok* meetings since the *barangay kagawads* in charge of the particular *purok* will go to each house to disseminate the things that the *purok* members need to know. With this, people or the members can also feel that the heads of the community have their own efforts on reaching out to the members of their community.

Moreover, the structure alone symbolizes the efforts that the people have done in order to build the *dap-ayan*. The building of the *dap-ayan* is considered as an output for the cooperation among the community members considering that all of them can have the right to use the *dap-ayan* as long as it is used properly.

In this regard, the *dap-ayan* has served as a place which allows the *purok* members can go to anytime they want. For this reason, the *dap-ayan* has allowed the people to feel that there is a space allotted for them, and in most cases, unconsciously allowing the members of the *purok* to discuss different issues that they may need to discuss as a community. These informal discussions will then be relayed to their *kagawad*, who can raise it to the *barangay* captain for further discussions.

Resolution of Inter-Family Conflicts

The *dap-ayan* serving as an area for the resolution of conflicts has been one of the common functions of the *dap-ayan* in the community. However, before this institutionalization, the resolution of inter-family conflicts in the *dap-ayan* is usually mediated by the elderly or only the parties involved will talk with each other. In most situations, the conflicts are also brought immediately at the *barangay* level to be settled by the *barangay* captain. However, after the institutionalization, the formation of *Lupong Tagapagkasundo* (a group assigned for amicable settlement) has made the resolution of the conflicts to start at the *purok* level before going to the *barangay*.

In the town of Pinili, the organization of the *Lupong Tagapagkasundo* in every *dap-ayan* has enabled the *purok* members to independently solve different conflicts that may arise within their community. The *Lupong Tagapagkasundo* is comprised of different members of the *purok* who serve as mediators in the resolution of conflict between the parties involved. This also shows that the issues within the *purok* are considered as public since members of the *purok* can go to the *dap-ayan* and serve as witnesses in the process. The initiative of the people to organize such organization implies that any *purok* member also has their roles

which they can carry out in their community. Moreover, this shows the community members' willingness to solve different issues among themselves.

As what has been mentioned above, it is deemed that nine out of ten cases are resolved in the *dap-ayan*. This implies that the people are willing to have immediate resolution of the different conflicts within the *purok*. The attendance of the *pumurok* (a term used to refer to any member of the community) through the organized *Lupong Tagapagkasundo* and the other people who wants to listen. This resolution of conflicts within the *dap-ayan* validates the participation of the members of the community in such affairs.

The resolution of inter-family conflicts within the *dap-ayan* also allowed the community members to have more choices of solving their disputes. Instead of going directly to the *barangay* hall, they can solve their disputes among them in their *dap-ayan* with the assistance of the elderly and the *barangay kagawad*. Within the *purok*, the issues can be resolved faster since they try to solve the issues among themselves, with the help of their neighbors.

Social Gatherings

The *dap-ayan*, in some cases, serves as a place for social gatherings of the *purok* and it also serves as a *pagtarusan ti bisita* (place where visitors can go to) during special occasions especially during *padaya* (feast). This situation is very common for the people living near the households.

Social interaction is seen as one of the best ways to create the feeling of social inclusion among the members of the community. Through regular social interactions, members of the community can feel that they are being involved in various community affairs and this gives them the feeling that their participation in the activities is significant.

In addition, social gatherings such as Christmas programs and other occasions that the *purok* organize or celebrate increases the camaraderie among the members of the community. Through these occasions, people feel that they are involved in different activities of the community. Unconsciously, people feel that relationships are strengthened and they try to collaborate with each other toward a common goal. Similar with the findings in Indonesia (Gadja Mada University, 2010), not all public spaces are used for the public need, but usually are used for social interaction. This kind of social interaction also gives the people a better sense of community since they have more common interactions that discuss their common matters of interest.

The kinds of activities that people do in relation to their community are also necessary to increase community participation. People want to see direct and real benefits from the activities that they are doing for their communities. These kinds of activities including the conduct of some religious activities in the *dap-ayan* makes the people think that the *dap-ayan* is more functional. This is in line with some people's belief of "*Diyak pati, diyak kita*" (I do not believe in what I do not see) because they see the real direct benefits that they can get from building the *dap-ayan* and by participating in its different activities.

Livelihood Activities and Trainings

One of the goals of the ordinance is to allow the people manage their own communities, and this makes them self-sustaining members of the community. Livelihood trainings and seminars were not conducted in the *dap-ayan* prior to the institutionalization. The trainings,

seminars and livelihood activities started after the *dap-ayan* was institutionalized as a permanent *purok* center. Trainings such as cosmetology, better farming methods or seminars on waste management and family planning make the people more involved in different activities. People like to participate in activities that would highly benefit them. Knowing that these people benefit from these trainings, they would be very willing to attend. The different trainings and seminars also make the community members feel that the different government agencies are trying to reach out for them through these activities. While doing my interview with the informants, one of the residents sitting in the *dap-ayan* said that they wanted to have continuous seminars, so that they are continuously reminded of their responsibilities for their environment and to their family.

Education and Recreation

One of the main uses of the *dap-ayan*, even before the institutionalization, is that it serves as a good place for people to take a rest and to chat. The *dap-ayan* is an open space for the members of the community regardless of their age or gender. As what has been mentioned before, people can go to the *dap-ayan* anytime they want to and some people can go there just to relax after work. While some *purok* members are in the *dap-ayan* taking a rest, other members can also go there and this starts a conversation among the community members. During these periods, people who are in the *dap-ayan* are not only taking a good rest but they are also discussing different issues in their community that are directly affecting them. Some of these topics include family issues or some problems within their surroundings that need immediate actions. These simple conversations give them the chance to understand other members of the community and increases social relationships among the members. These conversations also make the members of the *purok* learn more from each other. The continuous renovation of the *dap-ayan* can also be a factor that has encouraged the people more to stay in the *dap-ayan* because they built it.

Problems Encountered In the Operation of the Dap-Ayan

There were two problems identified by the informants regarding institutionalization of the *dap-ayan*. The main problem identified was the budget allotted for the construction and/or maintenance of the *dap-ayan*. This budget is expected to be included annually in the local government unit's internal revenue allotment. Monetary problems are encountered in the implementation of the *dap-ayan* and on its maintenance.

The *dap-ayan* needs to be renovated every year. This means some parts of the *dap-ayan* need to be changed annually since these are only made of wood or bamboo. In this regard, the *purok* especially the *barangay* officials feel that there should really be a particular amount allotted for every *dap-ayan* to really make the *dap-ayan* good. At present, there is a budget for every *dap-ayan* and this is part of the internal revenue allotment for the *barangay*. The amount usually ranges from around Php8,000 to Php12,000 depending on how much the *barangay* allots for their respective *dap-ayans*. However, the *barangay kagawads* feel that this is not enough since these amounts are divided and distributed to the seven *puroks*. The rest of the other expenses are expected to be shouldered by the members of the *purok*. Thus far, this has been considered by some *purok* members and *purok* officials as a problem since money is still a significant factor in the construction and maintenance of the *dap-ayan*. Although people are very willing to extend their help or services for the establishment and

beautification of the *dap-ayan*, they feel that financial help is still necessary because not all members can afford to shell out some amount for the *dap-ayan*.

Another problem is that some *purok* members want to receive more trainings and seminars given by the local government because they mentioned that conducting of trainings has stopped few years ago. Some *puroks* have never experienced having some trainings or seminars from different organizations or at least from the different municipal local government agencies. According to some informants, some trainings and seminars are given in the *dap-ayans* before, but they have stopped such activities few years ago. In this regard, they hope that the trainings and seminars will be offered to the different *puroks*. Some of the informants feel that these trainings and seminars are very helpful to the community members, so such activities should be organized and conducted in the *dap-ayan* at least in a yearly basis.

Conclusion

In relation to the aforementioned findings, this study concludes that public spaces, like the *dap-ayan*, give the people a place for them to regularly interact with each other. People interact with each other through the different activities that they do in such public space. The different activities people do in public spaces increase community participation. These activities allow the members of the community to have their own responsibilities and feel that they are part of the community.

However, policy intervention can be very significant to maximize the use of public spaces and make it more useful to the community members. The institutionalization of the *dap-ayan* as a formal structure has made the operation of the *dap-ayan* more organized and this has also increased the functions of this public space. A support from the local government is needed in the community development process, although the main goal is to make the community be able to manage themselves. Decentralizing governance and bringing it to the grassroots level allowed the people to immediately answer their immediate needs.

Most importantly, allowing the community members to have their own initiatives in making their community better improves participation and it makes the community members identify their own resources. However, problems on financial assistance may affect their level of participation.

Based on these conclusions, the researcher recommends that the activities of one *dap-ayan* can also be adapted by the other *dap-ayans* if they are deemed necessary for their community since each *dap-ayan* has its own set of activities. The *purok* officers or *barangay* councilors can have discussions regarding their respective activities. The *barangay* officials, with the assistance of the municipal local government unit, should continue to come up with different activities that would sustain a continuous participation among the *purok* members. In addition, the institutionalization of the *dap-ayan* through the municipal ordinance has paved way to promoting community participation and it has guided the community members to fully utilize the functions of their *dap-ayans*; therefore, a similar ordinance can also be implemented by other municipalities who have *dap-ayans*. These include the neighboring municipalities of Pinili, Ilocos Norte.

To enhance the capacity of the *barangay* officials in the mediation process, the *barangay* officials and members of the *lupon (group)* should be given necessary training on how to properly handle amicable settlements or resolution of conflicts. The *barangay kagawads*, in cooperation with the municipal local government unit, are also encouraged to organize more livelihood and capability trainings that would make their people find more alternatives to improve their economic condition.

A specific amount of money, from the internal revenue allotment, should be allocated to ensure the continuous renovation of the *dap-ayan*. A further study regarding the history of the *dap-ayan* can also be done in order to fully understand the beginnings of this practice. Lastly, future researchers can also study other public spaces in other communities and how these are significant in the process of community development.

Community development should always be directed to the people and by the people. Public spaces provide a venue for people to interact with each other and the public policies serve as a good start to guide the people on how to maximize their available resources and to encourage participation. However, it is the government's role to support and guide these people. Over-all, making the people feel that they are being helped and allowing them to realize their own part in the improvement of their own communities is a significant factor that should be considered in the process of community development.

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Definition of Terms

In order to fully understand the study, the following terms are operationally defined as they were used in the study:

- Purok:** This is an Iloko term which refers to the smallest political unit in the community. This can be referred to as a hamlet or village, but purok only includes around 10 to 20 household members. This can also refer to the neighborhood.
- Barangay Kagawad:** This refers to the barangay councilor. In the discussions, they are referred to as the head of every purok.
- Barangay Tanod:** This term refers to the Barangay Police. These barangay police are tasked to maintain the peace of the barangay or purok.

- Pumurok:** This is an Iloko term which refers to the members of the purok or members of the community.
- Institutionalization:** For this study, this term refers to the process of making the dap-ayan as a formal structure through a policy, particularly through a municipal ordinance.
- Public space:** Public space refers to a publicly-owned area that people use in their daily activities and this is where people usually spend time together. For this research, the public space refers to the dap-ayan.
- Policy:** This term refers to the municipal ordinance that was used to institutionalize the dap-ayan and consider it as a formal structure where people can conduct various activities for their purok.
- Organizational Structure:** This refers to the organizational structure in the dap-ayan which is a set of officers duly elected or chosen by the members of the purok.
- Community Participation:** For this study, this term refers to the participation of the purok members in the different activities done in the dap-ayan.

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