Deepening Participation in PDC through Intercultural Communication:

Discussions Questions for Isang Bagsak Participants
List of Acronyms

CFSC - Communication for Social Change
IB – Isang Bagsak
IBSEA – Isang Bagsak Southeast Asia
ICC – Intercultural Communication
IP - Indigenous Peoples
NRM – Natural Resource Management
PANLIPI – Tanggapang Panligal Ng Katutubong Pilipino (Legal Assistance Center for Indigenous Filipinos)
PDC – Participatory Development Communication
PNRM – Participatory Natural Resource Management
PR&D – Participatory Research & Development
UPWARD – Users' Perspectives With Agricultural Research and Development
Acknowledgements

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Overview of Research Project

Intercultural Communication (IC) is a relatively young body of knowledge, applied most commonly in the fields of management and anthropology. Therefore, NRM practitioners may find it difficult, upon initial reflection, that potential harmonies between intercultural communication and development communication are somewhat unclear. However, an emphasis on participation, its current manifestations, and its possible reincarnations within NRM, prove to open doors to spaces of contemplation about the integration of IC into participatory development communication (PDC). PDC is a dynamic field with wide-reaching applications in development, and is inherently participatory.

Quebral in fact finds that labelling DC “participatory” is redundant, given that development communication is participatory by virtue of its very definition; its central goal is to empower the marginalized. (Cadiz, 2005) Despite the undeniable value of the sum total of participatory development endeavours, each project exemplifies one of many possible participatory ‘depths’. As a founder of DC, Quebral has observed over the years a tendency for DC to transform itself in concert with changes to broader development conceptualizations. (ibid.) As development evolves, so too should DC. This paper suggests a move toward a more explicit accommodation of culture, and its implications in multicultural settings, within the field of (PDC) for the purpose of deepening participation.

The expressions of those with whom I consulted on this project underlined some possibilities in this area. Using literature review to situate dialogue with IBSEA practitioners, this report points to how the participatory root of PDC may deepen under the intersection of IC and IB’s unique brand of DC. The main

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Jacqueline Ashby (1996) speaks to the potential pitfalls of failing to evaluate the participation in the range of projects and programs labelled ‘participatory’. I use the concept of ‘depth’ to differentiate between the less and the more effective participatory programs, where deeply participatory collectives are those that support equitable power-sharing by stakeholders for the creation of an appropriate agenda.
intention of this overview is to support the new, practicable entry points for IC that participants may forge.

My originally conceived work plan for this project focused on the question of intercultural communication within the context of IBSEA, one of IB’s five regional fora. IBSEA is a regional NRM network congruent with the IDRC’s Rural Poverty and Environment endeavour to support both “adaptive local responses to external threats and opportunity” and “participatory approaches to community-based ENRM as a precondition for sustainable rural development.” (IDRC, 2005;14) This plan also rested in the niche of IDRC endeavours to support networks that achieve more comprehensive capacity building, better-integrated stakeholders, and stronger local ownership, as it is recognized that not all networks achieve these goals. (Adamo, 2004; 25)

The goal of my initial proposal was to uncover new capabilities and techniques that would allow for greater intercultural effectiveness on the part of the network’s researchers, practitioners, and other stakeholders in six key skill areas (Bessette, 2004; 23-7) of Isang Bagsak by assessing current solutions and challenges around the mitigation of cultural boundaries in the IBSEA forum. From there, the idea was to integrate results into training modules for IB’s new adaptive learning program phase. Proposed methodology centred on participant consultation and literature review.

Informed by prior research and work in participatory, collective approaches to social justice and ecological protection, I sought to research intercultural communication within the setting of a regional initiative, understanding that such networks function best when deeply participatory. Attentively participatory, Isang Bagsak endeavours “to improve the kind of communication and participation” stakeholders of various cultures create together,” (Bessette, 2003) meaning that my project would build on already existent IC participant skills. IB projects have garnered positive evaluations since the network’s launch in 2001, and today there are nine institutional IB participants, five partners, and two regional fora.
Despite the clear successes, two of challenges that IB participants have noted are how to effectively establish research agendas, and how to overcome cultural barriers (Bessette, 2003). In light of IB’s rapid evolutions and cultural complexity (which is an invaluable resource), the consideration of how to build organization capacity remains pertinent. A PNRM network’s organizational capacity can be seen as dependent on the group’s agreement on, and implementation of, relevant objectives, (Horton, 2003; 31, Vernooy & McDougall, 2003) and also depends on equitable management of internal power relations (Wind, 2004). Thus, two areas of participation – agenda setting and power-sharing, are the principles towards which my project ultimately leaned.

In the end, my research activities diverged from the original idea both because my contract had to end sooner than was anticipated when I was offered a permanent job back in Canada, and because of certain on-the-ground realities common in relatively short field research missions, such as misaligned contact availabilities and illness. My methodology therefore underwent a transmutation from a tightly planned package into a series of informal, but highly instructive, interviews. In response to the real-time developments, my research questions shifted from broader interrogations around deep participation and standard participant skills in IC, to the two abovementioned aspects of participation, power-sharing and the creation of a common agenda, and how participants will negotiate among themselves the best ways to facilitate effectiveness in these areas. What follows are highlights of the changes in my research conceptualizations.

- My initial impression that IBSEA would be an excellent context within which to carry out a project on intercultural communication was reinforced; the group is multicultural, sophisticated, and busy at work with a rich recipe of Los Baños/IDRC PDC. However, as mentioned, the rap sessions that centered on power-sharing and blending priorities helped to focus the topic of participation to more discreet areas.
On IC’s potential place in PDC, responses were positive. Even with a wealth of experience in using their own IC skills, IBSEA participants evinced a desire to better understand intercultural communication. This included, in particular, an interest in considering what practitioners and researchers might be doing unconsciously as a result of their cultural positions, and how this constituted a possible opportunity for refining IC efficacy. These statements are reflective of the general trend in globalizing societies for cultural awareness to develop more slowly than cultural intermixing.

Finally, as my research progressed and I gained a more immediate familiarity with both IC and PDC within IB, my originally intended output was striking me as increasingly inappropriate. Specifically, my five weeks in the Philippines would not allow for enough participation to yield valid results for such a new and dense topic. I came to feel that, on top of the time shortage, there was a major step missing in the methodology. By combining already existent IB participant IC capabilities and weaknesses - albeit self-identified - with theoretical norms of IC, and then feeding them into training modules, I would be normalizing an incomparable source of creativity, the unabridged dialogue of IB participants on this potentially nebulous concept of IC. Given all these realizations, I proposed to the IDRC responsible officer and the IBSEA Program Coordinator that I instead develop the questions included in this document. I feel that unfettered, self-monitored discussion among participants is what would yield real answers to the questions of how IC may fit into PDC.

The most positive element of my changeable workplan was that I was exposed to a more diverse spread of opinions and ideas than I had originally foreseen, voiced from a variety of roles within IBSEA ensemble of practitioners and researchers—along with students of other PNRM domains.
Namely, I met with IBSEA Program Coordinator and Dean of the College of Development Communication, UPLB, Maria Celeste Cadiz and presented my research to a group of approximately 30 UPLB faculty and graduate students, who were invited to pose questions and comments.

As the IBSEA participant institution that is particularly concerned with cultural integrity, PANLIPI was ideally positioned to provide experience-based feedback on my IC thinking, and from Los Baños I traveled to Manila repeatedly to consult with PANLIPI Coordinator, Maria Vicenta Guzman, central office staff, as well as indigenous community leaders and members.

In addition to IBSEA organization and individual participants, I had communications with UPWARD, whose staff expounded their own understanding of what makes participatory NRM participatory, and offered opportunities to see PR&D in action.

The questions I present in the conclusion of this study stem from my interactions with those mentioned above—some of whom are IBSEA practitioners—and are designed for use by IB participants using the on-line forum. A second analytical framework for my recommendations is the literature, and thus what follows is a synopsis of some pertinent theory.

**Participatory NRM**

At the most general level, participation in development is an offshoot of the political justice-centred ideal on which all human societies and processes labelled 'democratic' are based. It is, in this way, "a form of power that is

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3 IB theme discussions are oriented to the consideration by participants (NRM researchers and practitioners) of communication from their respective perspectives, and within the context of their own research, including their understanding of the difficulties involved with the theme. The process is as follows: First, the resource person introduces a theme by via the on-line forum and e-mail, after which point one person from each team copies the theme, distributes it to other team members, and organizes a meeting. A synthesis of the meeting is then sent to the on-line forum, and by e-mail, usually within two weeks. At this point, teams meet again to discuss the input of other teams, and a synthesis of this discussion is similarly posted. Then, the resource person provides extra comments "to underline some aspects of the discussion or to introduce important issues that were not addressed during the discussion." (Bessette, 2005) The moderator provides an overall synthesis of the theme discussions. Teams can now again provide input if they wish.
germane to effective, inclusive development." (Booth, 1998) IDRC institutionalizes PNRM research both through programmes and projects, as well as an according set of principles (Gonzalves, et al., 2005), which include the following criteria:

- Research shall reflect a clear and coherent common agenda shared by stakeholders;
- Power-sharing and risk-sharing shall be consciously embedded in PNRM strategies.

These ideas fall in line with one of Vernooy & McDougall's (2003) principles of good practice in PNRM—"a clear and coherent common agenda... among stakeholders." Two indicators of special relevance here are: “1.1 The research (and extension) agenda has been set collaboratively and transparently, and; 1.2 The research (and extension) design allows space for the meaningful participation of local stakeholders, including marginalized groups, and takes into account potentially differentiated perspectives and interests (based on gender, class, age, ethnicity or other aspects).” Of note is the fact that cultural differences are often also associated with power differentials. So for participation to be deepened, NRM practitioners must gain an accurate understanding of stakeholder relations, including "an assessment of power relations and the real or potential conflicts of interest and expectations between stakeholders.” (Mayoux, L. 2003) This potential stumbling block may stem from decision-making processes, as a focus on consensus can actually serve to mask differences, (Mayoux, 2006) potentially silencing the most vulnerable and fuelling unresolved conflicts. Although participatory praxes necessarily pretend to address the unequal distribution of power within human groups, the gap between ideal and reality has sometimes proven sizeable in NRM.

What about the power dynamics peculiar to NRM regional networks? More precisely, the notion that networks can only be effective if internal power relations are properly balanced (Wind, 2004) suggests that Isang Bagsak, a
PNRM program comprised of regional networks, would benefit from careful scrutiny of who controls what, how. The question of agenda setting, which can imply varying degrees of participation, runs though all the steps of the IB PDC methodology Bessette, 2004; 23-7); from establishing a relationship with a local community to assessing the results of the project, agendas must be negotiated, agreed upon, and renewed. However, since PDC falls into the convergence model of communication, of which mutual understanding is a cornerstone, a subject relevant to agenda-setting and power-sharing is how participants know, collectively, and individually, when mutual understanding has been reached. Reflective of the ongoing challenges in the domain of participatory NRM, a few of my informal interviews in the Philippines uncovered differing views on what participation was, and should be, in the IBSEA context.

Intercultural Communication is a body of thought whose heritage has been relatively less indoctrinated in political precepts. Therefore, a portion of research that has so far remained under-examined is that of power relations, and at least one founding IC theorist calls for more attention to this topic. (Gudykunst, 2003; 164)

**Participatory Development Communication**

DC is "a term for method-driven and theory-based praxes that use participatory communication tools to strengthen decision-making processes and structures," following the objectives of improving livelihoods and promoting social justice." (Manyozo, 2006) DC formulates communication as a social, cyclical, two-way process over time, at work in relationships of interdependency, which reveals an underlying cybernetic view of human information systems. (Kincaid, 1979). Along with these assumptions is the belief that communication intends to foster mutual understanding, agreement, and collective action, and DC accordingly often attends to message aspects such as silence, style and timing. This development tool is orchestrated by the stakeholders who are best
positioned to know the definitions and actions required for development in their communities – local, grassroots agents.

However, the pre-DC context of human communication had little to do with building collectivities equipped to face widely-shared social and environmental challenges. Kincaid (*ibid.*) clarifies the character of communication field prior to DC’s arrival on the scene by pointing out seven biases associated with the traditional linear models of human communication. These are the views that communication was a linear, one-way, usually vertical act independent of any context, in which one communicator necessarily depended on another. Communication was also seen as being more about the message per se and less about how it was expressed, important psychologically at the individual (as opposed to the social) level, and important mainly for persuasive purposes. Furthermore, its original Western conceivers found communication to flow unidirectionally and along lines of mechanistic causation.

DC – also known as Communication for Social Change (CFSC) and devcom – would bring about fundamental changes within communication disciplines. There are a number of different DC schools, two of which arose around WWII. One was the Latin American School, revolving around community radio stations to empower campesinos, thereby creating "a blueprint for participatory broadcasting" on an international scale. (Manyozo, 2006) Second, was the Indian School, which began in the 1940s when rural communities organized around radio broadcasting and listening in indigenous languages. However, the Indian programs were reinvented somewhat in the 1960s, with funds from Betton Woods institutions. A third concentration of activity that began around the same time was the Bretton Woods School itself, which tested communication strategies that often relied on radio to ‘teach’ development to the Third World. Despite its top-down beginnings, the Bretton Woods style has adapted along with more generalized refined of global development sensitivities.

A fourth school – the African one - has origins in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and sprouted up in both anglophone and a francophone milieus. The
francophone action was sponsored by Bretton Woods-school organizations and therefore involved the medium of radio, while the African anglophones in this field operated as a part of the current post-colonial and communist movements and used the theatre.

It wasn't until the 1970s that the Los Baños school came into being, and in its thirty years of existence it has greatly influenced the present global discourse on development communication, which can be defined as "the art and science of human communication linked to a society's planned transformation from a state of poverty to one of dynamic socio-economic growth that makes for greater equity and the larger unfolding of individual potential." (Quebral's, 2005) The School began by working on agriculture and rural development and maintained a central training and knowledge hub based at the UPLB, where a variety of focci developed. Within this school Nora Quebral has played a pioneering role by provoking thought and action, formulating momentous definitions of DC, and guiding dialogue along lines relevant to Third World—and especially Asian—experiences. Quebral is among a few Los Banos thinkers (Cadiz, 2006; Flor, 2004;4) who speak of the cultural dimension of development as being more and more "critical and worthier of attention." (Quebral, 2005) Notably, there has been considerable influence on the Los Baños School in the form of Western thinkers, institutions, and training, which is perhaps one explanation for the quite smooth collaboration between the Los Baños School and the IDRC-PDC School, of which Guy Bessette is a key institutional founder.

The latter School accordingly has always looked to North-South partnerships, in Asia, and beyond. The bases of PDC lie in notions of participatory practices, as well as those of media and interpersonal communication. Bessette (2004) defines PDC as "a planned activity… which facilitates a dialogue among different stakeholders, around a common development problem or goal, with the objective of developing and implementing a set of activities to contribute to its solution, or its realization… " By drawing out the needs and standpoints of participating individuals and groups, participation is purported as being PDC's (Bessette, 2004; 153).
Because of the last two Schools’ emphasis on DC based on grassroots-defined needs, along with a long-standing ability to collaborate across international development lines, the nexus where the PDC and Los Baños Schools meet in Isang Bagsak is an excellent site in which to examine how participation in DC operates, and how culture might affect the depth of participation displayed.

Culture

Philosophically, culture is something that interests many people involved with NRM, and the question of where the line between culture and nature should be drawn is one that echoes in many chambers of current environmental thought. Etymologically speaking, the world cultures derives from the Latin word 'colere', which means something skin to 'to build, care for, or cultivate,' telling of the many, and important values folded into any given culture. Another interesting thing about culture is its function in most societies—to allow people "to deal with problems or matters that concern them," Havilan (1993). Such observations are highly suggestive with respect to why culture is crucial to good NRM; in fact no NRM will be effective without at least implicit attention to culture. A question that should be addressed, though, is how does culture impact NRM practices and processes—especially those labeled 'participatory'—in practice?

In the exercise of defining culture, theorists have come up with a myriad of models. According to IC theorists, Samovar and Porter, culture is "the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, social hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relationships, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual group striving." (1999; 7) This definition of culture as a store, is rather static and therefore difficult to apply. A preferable understanding stems from Spencer-Oatey's (2000) model of culture, which is as broad in scope, but more detailed. Her model situates aspects of culture with respect to each another – such as core values (values and basic assumptions),
and portrays a 'mental' level of culture comprised, on the one hand, of attitudes, beliefs, and behavioural conventions, and the expression of these, on the other. The Spencer-Oatey theory also is more amenable to examinations of communication, and holds the following definition of culture: "a fuzzy set of attitudes, beliefs, behavioural norms, and basic assumptions and values that are shared by a group of people, and that influence each member's behaviour and his/her interpretation of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour." Kessing (1974) presents a complementary definition that specifies the creative, psychological, and partially unconscious aspect culture. He says culture, …a system of competence shared in its broad design and deeper principles, and varying between individuals in its specificities, is then not all of what an individual knows and thinks and feels about his world. It is his [or her] theory of what his [or her] fellows know, believe, and mean, his [or her] theory of the code being followed, the game being played, in the society into which he [or she] was born…

Put simply, culture can be seen as the inward and outward expression of dexterity with the social rules and tools of a given cultural.

It is generally agreed that culture is learned (rather than innate), transmitted from generation to generation, based on symbols, subject to change, ethnocentric, and is comprised of perception, verbal processes, and nonverbal processes. (Samovar and Porter, 1999;7-10) Perception is molded by such key definers as values, worldview, and social organizations, while nonverbal processes include body movements, facial expression, touch, use of space, and concepts of time. The following table serves to accentuate the potentially large impact variation of cultural elements can have on PNRM via intercultural communication:

Table I. : **Monochronic and Polychronic Culture**

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<th>MONOCHRONIC CULTURE</th>
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<td><strong>Interpersonal Relations</strong></td>
<td>Interpersonal relations are subordinate to present schedule.</td>
<td>Present schedule is subordinate to interpersonal relations.</td>
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4 Adapted from Victor, 1992; 234
Activity Coordination  Schedules coordinate activities; meeting time is rigid.  Interpersonal relations define activities; meeting time is flexible.

Task Handling  Tasks are completed one at a time.  Tasks are done simultaneously.

Breaks and Personal Time  Breaks and personal time are sacrosanct.  Breaks and personal time are subordinate to personal ties.

Temporal Structure  Time is inflexible and tangible.  Time is flexible and fluid.

Work/personal time separability  Work time is distinct from personal time  Work time is not clearly separable from personal time.

Organizational Perception  Activities are isolated from the organization as a whole; tasks are measured by output in time  Activities are integrated into organization as a whole; tasks are measured as part of the overall organizational goal.

Because it is so slow to change, being a deeply-seated social product, culture is something that should be approached carefully. Altering cultural elements is necessary for positive social change and good NRM, but such transformation must be agreed upon and enacted collectively and inclusively.

What I learned from PDC practitioners on culture helped to illustrate the sensitive role it plays in DC. For instance, Cadiz (2006) was interested to observe how one cultural group might view another’s ways in programming meetings. One IBSEA institution, PANLIPI, has a special interest in cultural integrity and therefore keeps a careful eye on culture. Working in the realm of Indigenous Peoples (IP) rights, PANLIPI defines cultural integrity as the redefinition by IPs of their reality "in accordance with who they truly are, how they want to live, and what they want to become, to bring genuine development to their peoples and communities." (PANLIPI, 2005;6) IBSEA participants value culture and are interested in looking at how it can be best managed to support good development through communication.

**Intercultural Communication**

Culture is not necessarily easy to incorporate into communication theories, as is evidenced by the long list of differing attempts to do so (Gudykunst, 2003;
Theoretical approaches have been devised to do one of the following: a) to position culture as part of the communication process; b) to position culture as a function of communication; c) to extract theories rooted in one culture, which are then applied to others; d) to generate theories that will explain communication between people of different cultures; and e) to generate theories that will explain differences in communication from one culture to another. Each of these areas relate to different parts of the intercultural and cross-cultural discourse. A solid underpinning of the evolving theoretical marriages of culture and communication is the belief that both culture-specific and culture-general information are imperative to understanding communication in any culture.

Intercultural communication is an appropriate consideration with respect to development, given that most development contexts are multicultural and because cultural sensitivity is needed to guide NRM, as it is so closely related to culture. Indeed, CBNRM explicitly adopts culture as a key element (CBNRM Networking, 2005) However, many NRM programs often fail to properly attend to culture, a problem that must be remedied if the field’s adaptive capacity and knowledge quality and relevance are to be safeguarded. (Stratford & Davidson, 2002) If the development is participatory, IC becomes that much more pertinent. For the purposes of this paper, IC is defined as "a symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual process in which people from different cultures create shared meanings." (Lustig & Koester, 2006; 46) This cognitive construction of the phenomenon allows implications for its practical place in PDC.

Within and beyond NRM, IC has become increasingly pertinent due to a few major developments, such as new technology (specifically transportation and communication systems) accelerating intercultural contact, a globalizing economy that brings people into closer contact, and new and intensified immigration patterns (Samovar & Porter, 1999; 5). As Quebral (2005) puts it, communities have “telescop[ed] into each other” and are “forced, willy-nilly, to interact with each other.” The construction of an IC field has been primarily an impetus to help support human security despite the risks posed by heightened intercultural interaction, as well as to support international business. While
traditionally IC was a concern of the elite, today’s speedier and more widespread intermingling brings IC into the regular worlds of a larger populace. "Although intercultural contact has a long history, today’s intercultural encounters are far more numerous and of greater importance than in any previous time in human history." (Samovar & Porter, 1999; 5)

IC theory has a branch whose precepts overlap with DC, and this is due to a common root strand in The Convergence Theory core. Not surprisingly, Cultural Convergence IC theory (Barnett & Kincaid, 1983) defines communication as a process whereby people share information in order to reach a mutual understanding of each other and the world. A theoretical relative is Gunykunst’s (1995) Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) Theory, a package of axioms that look at how humans can control uncertainty and anxiety to make communication more effective, and examines how intercultural interaction makes this a peculiar challenge. AUM suggests the practice of mindfulness as a way to mitigate the inevitable uncertainty and anxiety, or unhelpful lack there of, that arises in intercultural situations. It also emphasizes self-awareness as key to effective IC. There is a third theory in this area, which is Effective Group Decision Making Theory, (Oetzel, 1995) integrating vigilant interaction theory and the cross-cultural theory of face negotiations and conflict management. This theory stresses the importance of fostering a sense of interdependence among cultural groups, and implies the salience power-sharing issues in IC, since "the more equal member contributions and the more group members are committed to the group and its decision, the more effective the decision." Each of these theories focuses on bringing about effective outcomes in intercultural communication.

Since there are at least 15 theories covering aspects of intercultural communication and five main focuses for IC theorists to date (Gudykunst, 2003;163), there are a number of other, quite different, IC camps. Besides the group concerned with effective outcomes, there are also bodies of discourse that examine: accommodation or adaptation, identity management or negotiation; communication networks, and; acculturation or adjustment. Partially because of
the youth of the field, there has not been enough synthesizing to prevent redundancies across groups, however each one brings something unique to the discussion.

**Conclusion**

DC – whether labeled participatory or not - is intended to follow principles of participation. It is a theoretically rich and active field with a heavy Third World representation. Because of its action-oriented, tightly planned, and accessible methods, the PDC enacted by IBSEA has effected many useful results. A way to ensure even deeper participation would be to further open agenda-setting and power-sharing – two core elements of PNRM - by incorporating participant experiences of culture and intercultural communication. Some IBSEA researchers with whom I spoke reinforced the possible future utility of reevaluating how participation is allowed to flourish within the regional network, while most evidence reflected the already deeply participatory nature of IB.

Culture is changeable, but not easy to change, given its importance to human identities and activities. It has generally been at least somewhat neglected in NRM, despite its crucial role in fulfilling PNRM objectives. Isang Bagsak is an intriguing locus for this subject, since efforts to attend to culture, as defined by communities and practitioners are already underway in some organizations. When the topic of culture is not an explicit topic of institutional knowledge-building, participants are still easily engaged on their definitions of, and relationships to, culture. The next step would be more active and directed dialogue within the communicative framework of IB.

As for IC, which has natural synergies with DC, this field holds promise for supporting agenda-setting and power-sharing within the framework of Isang Bagsak PDC. The fact that PANLIPI completed earlier this year an organizational competency assessment with a major ‘cultural competency’ component speaks to the level of already existent interest among certain IBSEA participants.
Finally, an additional consideration that underlies all portions of this research project is where to draw the line between the cultures engaged in PDC. Certain DC researchers have indeed raised the point that measuring social change in a group requires first defining that group. (Figueroa, M.E., et al., 2002) Given that a social group breeds the culture through which communication filters; these collectives, and their identities, must be known better before looking into more deeply-participatory agenda-setting and power-sharing.

These considerations could be addressed, in part, through participant engagement on the recommended theme discussion questions listed below. To lead to effective dialogue, these questions would best be posed after participants had reflected on a synopsis of the concepts covered in this, with a particular emphasis on the generally least known one, intercultural communication.

**Theme Questions**

**Q1** – In PDC activities, how are cultural group boundaries apparent?

**Q2** - How does culture impact participation in IB?

**Q3** - How is the creation of a common agenda impacted by cultural barriers within IB?

**Q4** - How is power-sharing impacted by cultural barriers within IB?

**Q4a)** How can cultural barriers be managed in order to improve power-sharing among IB individuals?

**Q4b)** - How can cultural barriers be managed in order to improve power-sharing among IB organizations?
Q5 – How would intercultural communication concepts be integrated into PDC to deepen participation in PDC agenda-setting?

Q.5a) How might intercultural communication be applied at the individual level to deepen participation in PDC agenda-setting?

Q5.b) - How might intercultural communication be applied at the inter-organizational level to support participation in PDC agenda-setting?

As a regional network that creates spaces for community-level participation in NRM, IBSEA is a notable part of the worldwide PNRM scene. Nevertheless, the history and present influences of global development remain characterized by power imbalances. Two challenges that IB participants have identified - effective establishment of research agendas and overcoming cultural barriers – underscore the utility of deepening the network’s participation in specific areas. My consultations with IBSEA participants indicated that an introduction of IC into PDC to support participation would be timely and welcome. Building on the common ground of convergence communication theory, which rests of the belief that communication flows between actors who seek to share (minimally) an understanding of their dialogue, IC and PDC have a rich potential for union. IB participants could bring their own experiences to bear regarding the suggested questions as the commencement of more extensive deliberation.
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Portia Taylor

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