

## **Participation in tourism: Cases on Community-Based Tourism (CBT) in the Philippines**

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### **Abstract**

Tourism continues to grow as a significant industry generating economic growth and development in the Philippines. Associated with its success is the participation of communities surrounding tourist destinations. As a result, community-based tourism (CBT) initiatives have emerged to account for community's increasing participation in tourism development. While gaining increased popularity, understanding how local community participation is promoted in such initiatives has become an imperative. It has become necessary to investigate whether CBT has achieved its objective of addressing the inequitable distribution of benefits and negative impacts of tourism development in the country. This study will specifically explore the cases of community participation in El Nido Resorts, Bojo Aloguinsan Ecotourism Association, and Kawit Community-Based Heritage Tourism to understand how local community participation is incorporated in tourism destination development in the Philippines. The findings of this study will pose implications in the development of community-based tourism initiatives and programs in the Philippines and other developing economies.

**JEL Classifications:** L83, Z32, D78,

**Keywords:** tourism, participation, development

### **Introduction**

Tourism has emerged as a significant industry generating economic growth and development in the Philippines. It has become an economic pillar of growth in the services sector of the country together with OFW remittances and the Business Process Outsourcing – Information Technology (BPO-IT) sector (Villegas, 2017). In 2017, the industry's total contribution to the country's GDP was estimated at 12.2 percent (PHP 1,929.3 billion). The industry's contribution was higher by 24.2 percent compared to its contribution last 2016, which was reported at PHP 1,533.7 billion (Philippine Statistical Authority [PSA], 2018). In terms of employment, according to PSA (2018), the total share of employment of the industry to the total employment of the country was at 13.1 percent (5.3 million) in 2017, which is 0.9 percent higher compared to 2016.

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Reinforcing the industry's continuous and sustained upward direction is the increasing tourist arrivals from established and opportunity markets. Recent data from DOT showed that in 2017, approximately 96.7 million domestic tourists and 6.62 million international tourists visited the Philippines (Rocamora, 2018).

Apart from the industry's established economic contributions, tourism continues to form part of the development strategy of the country. In the Philippines, tourism development strategies are underscored in the 1991 Tourism Master Plan, 2011-2016 and 2017-2022 National Tourism Development Plan, and the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022, where tourism is identified as one of the priority sectors that will enhance service exports in the global value chain.

In this light, tourism is perceived as a common resource whose benefits should be readily accessible and felt by communities in the country. A flourishing tourism industry in a locality should ideally serve as a poverty-alleviating tool that stimulates economic activities, while ensuring that benefits "trickle-down" even to the poorest members of the society (Dwyer & Thomas, 2012). Tourism is expected to foster growth and development among communities to which its activities are pronounced. The industry could create jobs, develop backward linkages, improve the quality of life through improvement of infrastructure and basic utilities, training and education (de Kadt, 1979). However, problems on equitable distribution of these benefits continue to persist.

Some cases show that tourist destinations often face problems of *elite capture* where those who hold power have special access to obtain special favors and exemptions for themselves at the expense of the local community. Without effective community participation and ownership, the economic activities generated by tourism may not benefit the community found in a destination (Roxas, Rivera & Gutierrez, 2018). More than the objective of contributing to economic growth and increasing per capita GDP, it must be ensured that development is both sustainable and equitable (Stiglitz, 2002). This is where local community involvement in tourism development becomes necessary.

Community participation helps in the achievement of equitable distribution of material resources, as well as, in knowledge sharing and learning through self-development (Connell, 1997). Participation is therefore essential in promoting long-term development that encompasses transparency and openness (Stiglitz, 2002). With this, Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has been introduced as a mechanism to ensure local community participation in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of tourism development. Identified as one of the important stakeholders in tourism development (Bjork, 2000), local community participation is perceived as an essential element to pursuing sustainable tourism development.

A comparative approach to tourism studies has been used lengthily used in the existing literature. This approach has paved the way to measuring the validity and significance of observations, as well as, to improve the understanding of a subject (Dominguez-Mujica, 2015). In this paper, a comparative lens is used to highlight the similarities and differences

among the variety of features of destinations (Baum, 1999), specifically the level of community participation in tourism development. The comparative case study method will utilize secondary data, specifically the existing literature on El Nido Resorts, Bojo Aloguinsan Ecotourism Association, and Kawit Community-Based Heritage Tourism.

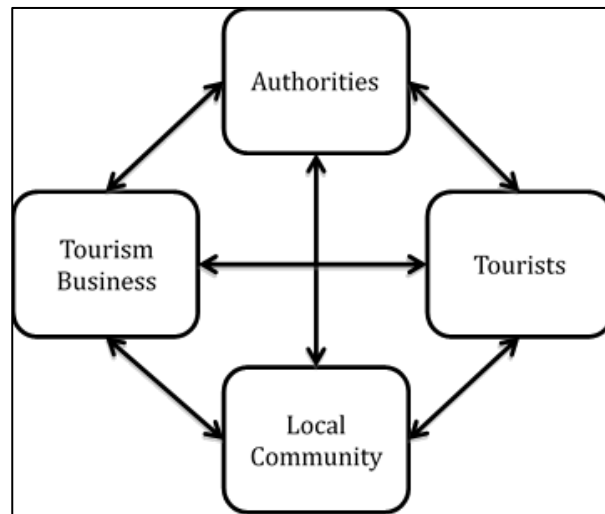
Given this background, this study would like to explore “how local communities participate in tourism development?” This will be done by examining the cases of CBT initiatives in the Philippines, specifically in El Nido Resorts, Bojo Aloguinsan Ecotourism Association, and Kawit Community-Based Heritage Tourism using Arnstein (1969)’s Ladder of Citizen Participation. To address this question, this study aims to do the following:

- To conduct a cross comparative case study on CBT initiatives in the Philippines;
- To determine the level of community participation in tourism development among these cases;
- To understand how community participation is incorporated in tourism development in CBT initiatives.

Since community-based tourism (CBT) initiatives have been gaining popularity, understanding how local community participation is promoted in such initiatives has become an imperative. The findings of this study will pose implications in the development of community-based tourism initiatives and programs in the Philippines and other developing economies.

### **Community-Based Tourism (CBT) and Community Participation**

Local community participation in development initiatives has been a trend for years now. Despite conventionally being viewed as solely falling under government responsibility, successful tourism development has required stakeholder participation. Stakeholder participation is emphasized in Bjork (2000)’s key players framework wherein tourism development is defined as an activity requiring a multi-stakeholder approach. As shown in *Figure 1*, identified tourism stakeholders include authorities, tourism businesses, tourists and local communities. The interaction of each stakeholder is important in ensuring sustainable tourism development. In the same manner, as Okazaki (2008) highlighted, community participation is important in pursuing sustainable tourism.



**Figure 1.** Key Players in Tourism

Source: Bjork (2000)

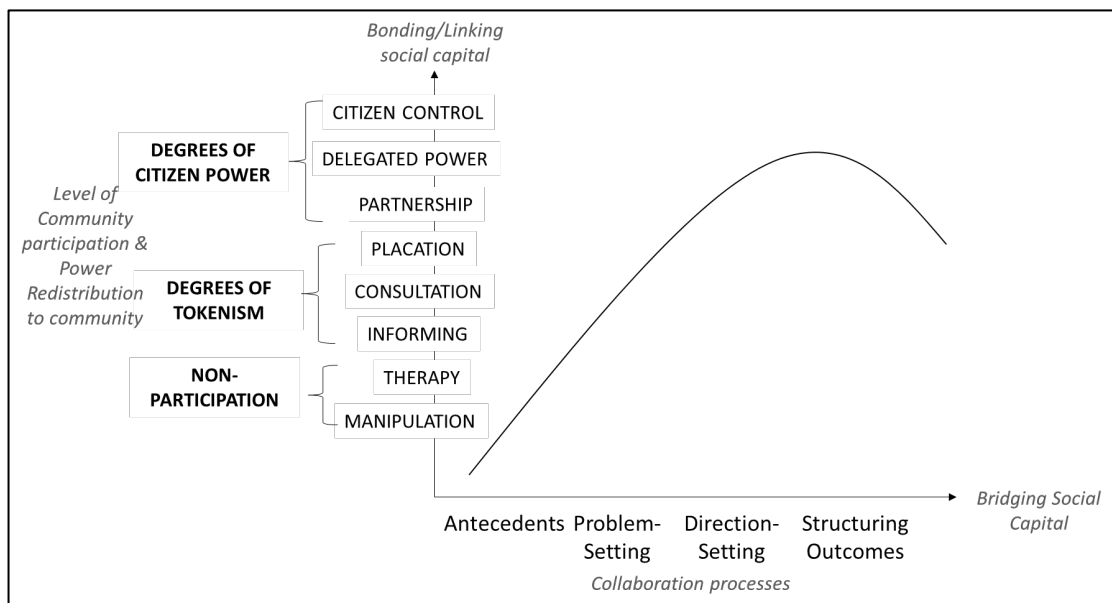
Recent studies have explored the involvement of the local community in the management of tourism destinations (Mena, 2010), wherein community-based tourism is perceived as an alternative form of tourism management (Tokeree and Panyadee, 2013). It is a form of tourism management practice that yields high-level of participation among local community members in income generating tourism activities (Brohman, 1996). The concept of community-based tourism is therefore a venture that is made possible by the concerted effort of various tourism stakeholders, with a specific focus on the participation of the local community.

Haywood (1988) defines community participation as a process of sharing decision-making by involving all stakeholders. Its main objective is to ensure power redistribution, facilitating equal and equitable distribution of both benefits and costs of tourism activities (Arnstein, 1969). To realize these objectives, communities must be empowered through awareness raising and transformative learning processes that allow them to understand the situation they are confronting (Reid, 2003).

While CBT remains an ideal arrangement to pursuing tourism development, many researchers have found problems in its implementation. Addison (1996) found that a participatory approach to tourism development is often time-consuming and lacking financial resources. Apart from the high transaction costs that can be incurred upon its implementation, maintenance costs are also daunting (Getz & Jamal, 1994). Dealing with the community also means dealing with conflicting vested interests and sets of power relations, varying needs and values (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). The capacity of local

community members is often insufficient, even if they are given the right to take part in the development process (Gray, 1985).

Despite these challenges, Okazaki (2008) cited reasons why CBT is still the best way to move forward in encouraging participation in tourism development. First, tourist experience is directly influenced by the behavior of locals. Local community members must benefit from tourism activities to avoid hostility and a sense of competition with tourists. Second, tourism image is primarily based on the natural assets of the community including its environment, facilities, and the host community. The conservation, preservation, and maintenance of natural assets highly-depend on how it is being treated by the local community. Third, community involvement in tourism allows protection of natural environment and culture. And finally, sustainable development of tourism is made possible if the socioeconomic development of the community is prioritized. In this light, employment opportunities that help improve income, skills, and institutions of people must be ensured (Jamal & Getz, 2000).

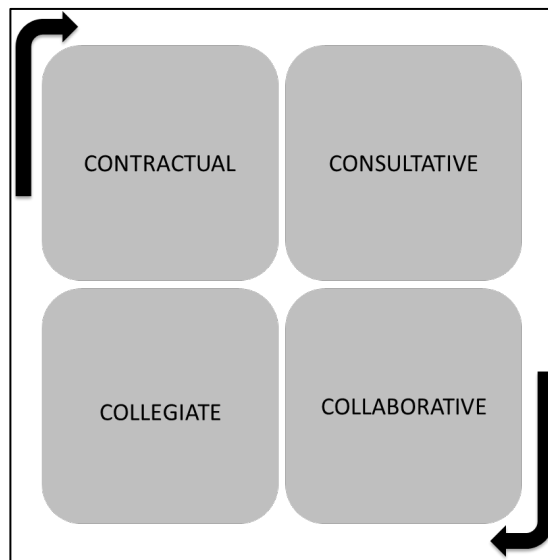


**Figure 2.** Ladder of Citizen Participation

Source: Arnstein (1969)

In understanding the level of participation in CBT initiatives, this paper will discuss examples in the context of Arnstein (1969)'s ladder of citizen participation that explains the steps and categories of the evolution of community participation. This is shown in *Figure 2*. The ladder is comprised of eight *rungs* and three levels of gradual evolution. The eight rungs explain the level of community participation and power redistribution to the communities. The first rung (manipulation) is the stage where participation is used merely for public relations purposes. It is considered the distorted image of participation. The second rung (therapy) is the stage where the values and attitudes of local community

members are adjusted to fit the views of those in power. Third rung (informing) is the stage where community members are informed of their options, responsibilities, and rights, which is considered the preliminary step towards legitimate and valid involvement. The fourth rung (consultation) is where the members are encouraged to express their views and opinions to facilitate full participation in the initiatives. The fifth rung (placation) is where community participation is growing although still considered as tokenism. The sixth rung, partnership, is where community members actively negotiate with those who hold power, thereby facilitating power and responsibility redistribution in planning and decision-making. The seventh rung (delegated power) is where the community members achieve dominant power over planning and decision-making. And finally, eight rung (citizen control) is where the local community is awarded the full control and responsibility in the management and development of tourism destinations.



**Figure 3.** *Modes of Participation*

Source: Biggs (1989)

Complementing this approach to examining the degree of community participation is Biggs (1989)' four modes of participation, namely: contractual, consultative, collaborative, and collegiate shown in *Figure 3*. Each mode refers to the continuously evolving level of participation of communities with the aid of another stakeholder. The first level is the contractual mode. In this mode, individuals are contracted to take part of inquiries and/or experiments, where community members are perceived as subjects of investigation. Consultative mode is when individuals or community members are actively consulted for opinions and suggestions prior to actual intervention. This is where plans are presented to community members for validation. The third mode is collaborative where individual members of the community work together in designing and initiating projects which are subjected to the approval or management of another stakeholder. Finally, the fourth mode,

is the collegiate participation where community members work alongside other stakeholders as colleagues with different but equally valid set of skills and knowledge. In this mode, mutual learning is espoused, and local community members have control over the process of project management. In this context, the modes of participation continuously change, evolve, and progress according to the needs of a situation.

Using Arnstein (1969)'s Ladder of Participation and Biggs (1989)' mode of participation (shown in *Table 1*), three cases of CBT initiatives in the Philippines will be examined in the following sections

**Table 1.** Community Participation in Tourism Development

Levels of Gradual Evolution	Levels of Community Participation (Arnstein, 1969)	Modes of Participation (Biggs, 1989)
Degrees of Citizen Power	Citizen Control Delegated Power Partnership	Collegiate Collaborative
Degrees of Tokenism	Placation Consultation Informing	Consultative
Non-Participation	Therapy Manipulation	Contractual

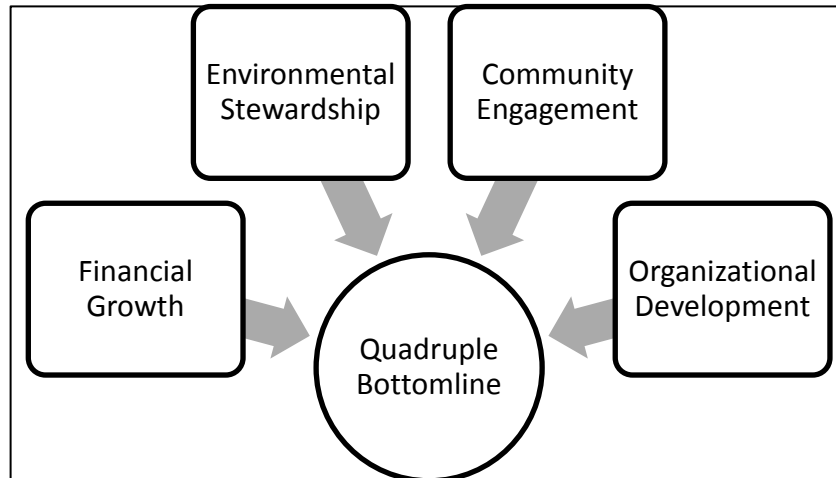
### **Community-Based Initiatives in the Philippines**

Community-based is a dominant form tourism in developing countries, such as the Philippines, where local communities are involved in the process of tourism development. In the Philippines, local community participation is being practiced in several parts of the country. Local community involvement as part of the business strategy of private enterprises is shown in the example of El Nido Resorts. Local community participation in the form of partnerships with non-government organizations (NGOs) is espoused in the example of Kawit Community-Based Heritage Tourism. Finally, a local community-governed tourist destination is exemplified in the operations of the Bojo Aloguinsan Ecotourism Association (BAETAS).

#### ***El Nido Resorts, Palawan***

El Nido Resorts (ENR) is a multi-awarded and internationally recognized sustainable resort in the Philippines, owned and operated by the Ten Knots Development Corporation (TKDC). It operates in several island resorts: Lagen Island Resort, Miniloc Island Resort, and Pangulasian Island Resort, Apulit Island Resort, and the Lio eco-tourism estate development for 30 years now. ENR focuses on sustainability and resilience through the quadruple bottom line strategy shown in *Figure 4*. The Quadruple Bottom Line Strategy is

underpinned by (1) financial growth, (2) environmental stewardship, (3) community engagement, and (4) organizational development.



**Figure 4.** *El Nido Resorts' Quadruple Bottomline Strategy.*

Source: Laririt (2015)

The strategy builds on the triple bottom line strategy proposed by Elkington (1994), which cites the importance of striking the balance among economic, social, and environmental benefits of tourism development. The element of organizational development is introduced in the quadruple bottom line approach.

For El Nido Resorts, the strategy is implemented by integrating both the community and employees of El Nido to a series of training and learning opportunities that facilitate discussions on environmental management, conservation and preservation such as the “Be G.R.E.E.N. (Guard, Respect, Educate, El Nido)” learning program. ENR offers its best practice by combining sustainability efforts from the national government, NGOs, private sector, and the local communities to achieve genuine ecotourism. ENR management ensures that the local community is actively taking part in the planning of policies, implementation, up to the monitoring and evaluation (Laririt, 2015).

ENR exemplifies a tourism management practice whereby private businesses incorporate local community participation in their tourism development strategy. In this example, local community is seen as significant stakeholders whose opinions and views matter in the pursuit of development.

***Kawit Community-Based Heritage Tourism (CBHT)***

The municipality of Kawit is sheltered in a total of 13.40 sq. km. land area, which has a total of 23 barangays, with a population of 76, 405 in the year 2007. According to the Provincial Tourism Office of Cavite, Kawit is the second location, next to Tagaytay City,



with the most number of tourist arrivals in 2014 with a total of 190, 242 visitors as shown in *Table 2*.

**Table 2.** Visitor Arrivals in Cavite, 2015

<b>City/Municipality</b>	<b>Domestic</b>	<b>Foreign</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Amadeo</b>	6,723	1,196	7,919
<b>Cavite city</b>	67,115	16,742	83,857
<b>City of Dasmariñas</b>	4,759	297	5,056
<b>General Trias</b>	2,501	184	2,685
<b>Kawit</b>	188,594	1,648	190,242
<b>Magallanes</b>	1,621	-	1,621
<b>Maragondon</b>	28,025	302	28,327
<b>Tagaytay City</b>	3,613,143	-	3,613,143
<b>Trece Martires City</b>	9,267	25,613	34,880
<b>TOTAL</b>	3,921,748	45,982	3,967,730

Located in a coastal area, Kawit had an array of local industries such as fishponds, rice paddies, salt beds, mangrove forests, and other coastal area industries. Producing a variety of crops, Kawit also had a thriving agricultural industry, producing a variety of fruits. Artisan and traditional industries are also located in the municipality such as *Pandayan* shops or knife-making shops. These industries were once considered lucrative before land and water areas were converted to residential industries (The Provincial Government of Cavite, 2014).

Community-based tourism has been applied Kawit through the Community Based Heritage Tourism (CBHT) framework of Fundacion Santiago. The framework provides programs, lectures, and neighborhood tours to the local community, allowing them to discover for themselves their cultural wealth, their history and heritage sites, while introducing them to income-generating practices in the venture towards sustainable heritage. It involves development interventions that utilize a bottom-up approach, aimed at alleviating poverty primarily by fostering the historical, cultural, and environmental wealth of a specific locality. The organization has specifically identified the framework's participants as those that are 'less in life'—members who have been out of school, housewives in search for other sources of income, etc. (Villalon, 2013).

Under the CBHT framework in Kawit, the members of the local community together with the Cavite El Viejo Heritage Tourism Association participated in the activities aimed at raising awareness about Kawit's history and culture. Emphasizing on the value of historical narratives in heritage tours, Fundacion Santiago provided a series of lectures, which allowed the participants to rediscover their locality's history and culture. Alongside these lectures, an activity on mapping possible tourism sites and industries were conducted. At the end of the series of trainings and preparations, a Kawit Heritage tour was created.

Exemplified in this example is local community participation in the form of partnerships with non-government organizations (NGOs) such as the Fundacion Santiago.

### ***Aloguinsan Ecotourism Association***

The Bojo Aloguinsan Ecotourism Association (BAETAS) is formed in 2009, with the help of the local government, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and other local organizations. The operations of BAETAS has already received several international awards recognizing their initiatives that foster community-based ecotourism: in 2017, it became the recipient of the ASEAN Tourism Award (ASEANTA) for the Best Community-Based Tourism (CBT) in Southeast Asia; in 2016, it was recognized by Green Destinations as one of the 100 "sustainable" destinations in the world; in 2015, it was awarded for Best Community-based Tourism Initiative at the Tourism InSPIRE Award by the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) (Quintas, 2017). Since its establishment, BAETAS has provided livelihood opportunities for more than 50 family members to date (Cacho, 2015). Through the tours it organizes, BAETAS showcases the natural areas as well as the culture of the community - the Bojo River Village Tour features a cruise down the river guided by a fisherman showcasing a variety of flora and fauna (Limpag, 2015). Shown in this CBT example is the over-all management of local community members of a tourism destination.

### **Conclusion**

The cases discussed in this study exemplified how local communities can be actively involved in pursuing tourism development initiatives, albeit in varying levels. For all three cases, the involvement of other stakeholder groups (i.e., local government unit, non-government organization, and tourism business) in initiating and/or encouraging local community participation can be observed. While the degree of involvement varies, it can be deduced that stakeholder involvement remains critical in pursuing any tourism initiative, including CBT.

As espoused by Bjork (2000)'s framework, the participation of all tourism stakeholders is important in ensuring that the costs and benefits of tourism development is accounted for and equitably distributed. Thus, for local communities to actively participate in tourism development, they must be informed and be made aware of their ability to be involved. People empowerment follows, where effective partnership becomes necessary. Such forms of partnerships are rooted in the cause of knowledge training and sharing which enhances the capacities of individuals and the rest of the community to act (Williams, Srivstava, Corbridge & Veron, 2003). In this process, the level of community participation evolves.

As reflected in this study, the level of participation in this context can be understood using Arnstein (1969)'s participation ladder and Biggs (1989)' mode of participation that helps identify the levels of community participation. *Table 3* provides a summary of the classification of each initiative in the participation ladder.

**Table 3.** The Ladder of Participation and Modes of Participation: The Cases of CBT in the Philippines

Levels of Gradual Evolution	Levels of Community Participation	Modes of Participation	CBT examples in the Philippines
Degrees of Citizen Power	Citizen Control	Collegiate	Bojo Aloguinsan Ecotourism Association
	Delegated Power Partnership	Collaborative	Kawit Community-Based Heritage Tourism (CBHT)
Degrees of Tokenism	Placation Consultation Informing	Consultative	El Nido Resort Community Involvement
Non-Participation	Therapy Manipulation	Contractual	

It can be deduced that local community participation in the context of ENR is in between the fourth rung, “consultation” and fifth rung, “placation” stages wherein locals are encouraged to express their opinions, as well as, to participate in the implementation of tourism initiatives. Using this framework, it can be concluded that local community participation is in the tokenism stage. In the Quadruple Bottom Line Strategy, the element of local community participation is fostered as part of ENR’s daily operations in pursuing tourism sustainability. The local community in El Nido is seen as partners in pursuing sustainability whereby constant consultations are made before any tourism policies are implemented.

In the case of Kawit Community-Based Heritage Tourism (CBHT), it can be deduced that local community participation is falling in between the sixth and seventh rung, “partnership” and “delegated power” respectively. In this example, local community negotiates with those in power, thereby promoting redistribution of power and responsibilities in planning and decision-making. With the help of Fundacion Santiago, the local community of Kawit is capacitated to facilitate its own tours without necessarily needing government support. The local community in this example has the dominant power over decision-making – how it will govern its tours, its facilitation, and how it can continuously involve and train other members of the community. Using the participation ladder, this level of participation can be classified as local community having citizen power.

Finally, the example of the Bojo Aloguinsan Ecotourism Association (BAETAS), can be classified into the eight and highest rung in the participation ladder, “citizen control.” Years of local government assistance and facilitation allowed and enabled the local community in Bojo to take full control of the management and policy in the development of the tourism destination. Local community in this case is awarded full control of the Bojo

River Aloguinsan tour. The management of the tours allow community members such boatmen, fishermen, housewives, etc. to facilitate and actively take part in the tours.

In addressing the question posed in this study, it can be observed that the level of community participation in tourism activities and development varies and continuously evolves. The participation of local communities in tourism development varies from being part of a consultation group, a partner in supporting initiatives, and in actual delegation and control over the projects (Biggs, 1989). The examples provided in this paper showcases how diverse forms of community participation is in the pursuit of tourism. It can be concluded that there exists a participatory approach in tourism development in the form of CBT initiatives. While the industry continues to grow and expand for the years to come, the achievement of sustainable tourism development can only be achieved if local community participation is incorporated. As emphasized by Arnstein (1969), the ladder of citizen participation aims to explain the necessary steps and varying levels of community participation in tourism development. In conclusion, CBT remains to be an example on how local community participation is incorporated as an indispensable element in pursuing development.

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