

# **Panakot to Higop: Proceedings of the Training on Action Research on Ilonggos' *Batchoy***

***Namit Gidl!*: A Multi-Stakeholders' Collaboration  
for Ilonggos' *Batchoy* Project Stakeholders'  
Meeting and Workshop Day 1**

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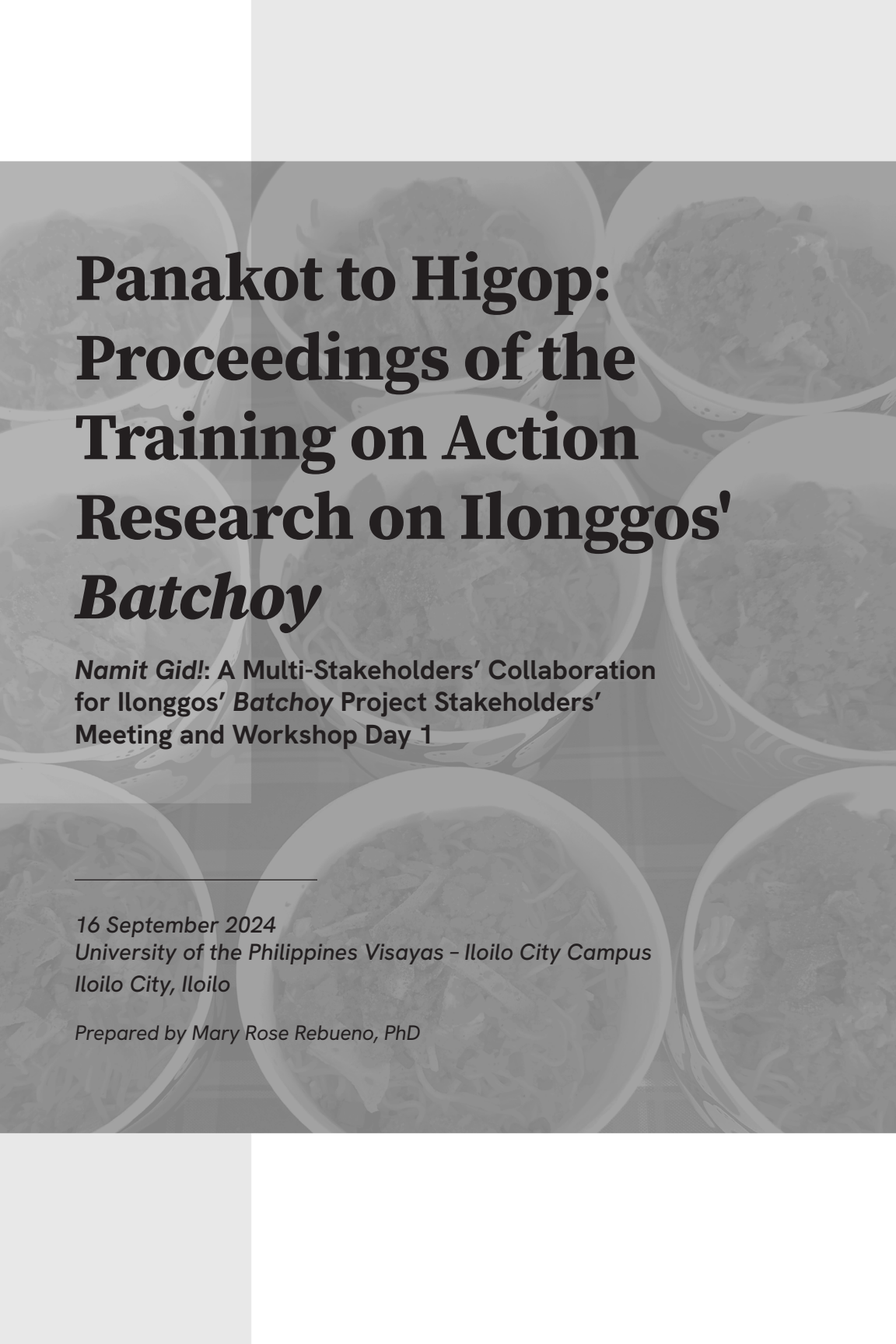
**16 September 2024**

**University of the Philippines Visayas – Iloilo City Campus  
Iloilo City, Iloilo**

***Prepared by Mary Rose Rebuena, PhD***



UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES  
CENTER FOR  
INTEGRATIVE AND  
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STUDIES



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**Cover image credit**

"Servings of Batchoy, highlighting the importance of food heritage in community engagement"

Photo by Aprille Danilly Guintibano

# Table of Contents

---

## **1 Overview of the *Batchoy* Project**

### **2 Batchoy Overview**

---

## **3 Resource Person Presentations**

### **3 Action Research Theory and Practice**

*Dr. Annette O. Balaoing-Pelkmans*

### **6 Action Research Theory and Practice**

*Ms. Jane Lynn Capacio*

### **9 Summary of Value Chain Overview**

*Dr. Anette O. Balaoing-Pelkmans*

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## **11 Discussion and Key Questions**

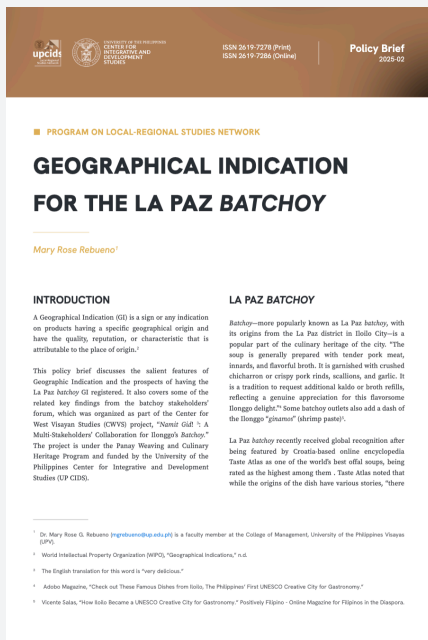
### **11 Challenges in Transforming Traditional Business**

### **13 Collective engagement of *Batchoy* Producers**

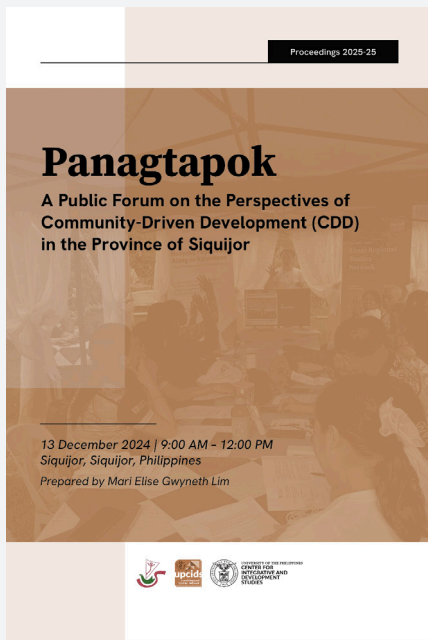
### **13 Future Ideation**

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## About the Proceedings

The Center for West Visayan Studies (CWVS) project entitled *Namit Gid! A Multi-Stakeholders' Collaboration for Ilonggo's Batchoy* is under the Panay Weaving and Culinary Heritage Program and funded by the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS). The project focuses on the history and cultural significance of Ilonggos' *Batchoy* in shaping its origins, evolution, and role in Iloilo's gastronomic identity.

With Iloilo City's designation as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy in 2023, the city is experiencing a surge in tourism, driven by its rich culinary heritage. This recognition, with Iloilo City's popularity as a convention destination, has significantly increased demand for local agricultural products. However, this demand outpaces the current supply, creating a pressing challenge for the sustainability of the tourism sector and the livelihoods of stakeholders within the agricultural value chain.

Thus, this project proposes a multi-stakeholder collaboration approach to address this challenge. By linking local government units (LGUs), academic institutions and business groups, the project aims to:

1. Scale up production: Enhance value-chain practices and resource management to increase the output of essential *Batchoy* production;
2. Integrate local supply chains: Foster collaboration and communication between *Batchoy* business owners and suppliers;
3. Create Incentives: Attract more *Batchoy* business owners and suppliers to join the value chain by implementing supportive policies and programs.

With this, a training on Action Research was conducted on September 16, 2024, at the UP Visayas Center for West Visayan Studies Office, Iloilo City. This was also a part of the preparation for the Batchoy Stakeholders Forum held the following day, September 17, 2024.



# Participants

## *Resource persons*

**Annette Balaoing-Pelkmans, Ph.D.** is the convenor of the Escaping the Middle-Income Trap: Chains-for-Change Program of the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies. She is also a Professorial Fellow of the UP School of Economics of UP Diliman and Research Fellow of the Partnerships Resource Centre of the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University, The Netherlands

**Jane Lynn D. Capacio** is a senior research analyst of the Escaping the Middle-Income Trap: Chains-for-Change Program of the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies and a Visiting Fellow of the Partnerships Resource Centre of the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University, The Netherlands

Other attendees for the Batchoy projects core group comprised representatives from the following:

- Iloilo City Local Government Unit (LGU)
- Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE)
- Local Economic Development and Investment Promotions (LEDIP)
- Heritage Council, the academic community, and consultants for the UNESCO City of Gastronomy

Meanwhile, the Batchoy project team included:

- Dr. Mary Rose Rebuena (Project Leader and Lead Writer)
- Febrey Bless Esclares (Senior Office Assistant)
- Aprille Danilly Guintibano (Administrative Aide IV)

and members of CWVS:

- Mr. Sashah Dioso (University Research Associate)
- Ms. Faith Saraza (Administrative Officer)
- Ms. Ophelia Baloga (Librarian)



- Participants and organizers of the Training on Action Research on the Ilonggos' Batchoy gathered for a group photo to mark a productive and collaborative session.



- The participants with EMIT resource persons and the project management staff.



# Overview of the *Batchoy* Project

“*Namit Gid!*: A Multi-Stakeholders Collaboration for Ilonggos' *Batchoy*” leverages a collaborative framework among LGUs, academic institutions, and businesses to address challenges and opportunities in the *Batchoy* industry.

The project will center on dialogues with *Batchoy* business owners in Iloilo City and will feature the following key activities:

- Stakeholder Mapping – In partnership with the Iloilo City Tourism Office, this activity will identify key actors, processes, and information flows within the value chain.
- Inception Meetings – These will involve forging partnerships, securing commitments, and conducting interviews with key stakeholders.
- Field Visits – Scheduled visits to *Batchoy* production sites and retail locations.

The project's accomplishments from June to September 2024, included:

- Onboarding sessions
- Planning meetings with Iloilo City MICE Center
- Presentations to the Iloilo City Council and the Iloilo City Heritage Council (ICLCAC-CCHC)
- Ceremonial Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) signing with Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas and UP Visayas Chancellor Clement Camposano

## BATCHOY OVERVIEW

Dr. Mary Rose Rebueno, project lead writer, introduced the *Batchoy* dish, a savory noodle soup originating from Iloilo, made with pork innards, beef, and pork strips, garnished with *chicharrón*. Known for its distinct taste, *Batchoy* is further enhanced by *ginamos* (fermented shrimp paste) and is ideally consumed in the afternoon. Dr. Rebueno highlighted the unique aspects of Iloilo's *Batchoy*, noting its roots in Hokkien Chinese, possibly derived from “*bac qui*” (meat soup).

She characterized popular *Batchoy* variations, including:

- *Buko Batchoy* (served in a coconut, adding a hint of sweetness)
- *Bulalo Batchoy* (infused with flavors from beef shanks and bone marrow for a rich broth)

She also listed Iloilo's major *Batchoy* establishments, such as:

- Inngo's Original La Paz Batchoy
- Popoy's Batchoy
- Alicia's Special Batchoy
- Ted's Oldtimer Lapaz Batchoy
- Netong's Original Special La Paz Batchoy
- Deco's Batchoy

Dr. Rebueno mentioned the *Batchoy* Festival, launched in 2020 as part of the Dinagyang Festival, which features a competition to determine the best *Batchoy*. Held in conjunction with the Grand Iloilo Food Festival, the event celebrates *Batchoy*'s heritage and variations. The Department of Tourism (DOT) Region VI has supported initiatives like the “Slow Food in Western Visayas” program, as well as the Western Visayas Sugar Heritage Trail and Boracay Food Crawl.

# Resource Person Presentations

## Action Research Theory and Practice

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*Dr. Annette O. Balaoing-Pelkmans*

Dr. Balaoing-Pelkmans started her discussion with the aspirations of Iloilo which include:

- Preserving and promoting Iloilo's cultural heritage assets
- Developing tourism and agriculture to attract investors
- Creating jobs and enhancing the quality of life for Ilonggos
- Ensuring Iloilo's capacity to support tourism growth sustainably
- Supporting sustainable agricultural supply chains
- Transforming production and business models within agriculture

She gave emphasis that as Iloilo City accommodates expansion as a UNESCO City of Gastronomy, there is a need to ensure sustainability of agricultural supply chains and transform production and business models in agriculture. There might be sustainability issues now and these come with a realization that the current way of doing things is no longer appropriate.

But to do this, Dr. Balaoing-Pelkmans stressed the importance of dialogue, because “conversations are needed that can open each other's ideas.” Furthermore, she discussed the need to build trust first before fundamental issues can be addressed. A collaborative framework can then be in place, with actionable strategies to strengthen Iloilo's cultural and economic landscape.



■ **Figure 1.** Dr. Balaoing-Pelkmans discussing Value Chain

Dr. Balaoing-Pelkmans discussed that Participatory Action Research (PAR) emphasizes collaboration with community members as co-researchers to address issues directly impacting their lives. It values the collective knowledge of the community (“wisdom of the crowd”) and encourages mutual learning among participants. It also prioritizes the needs of marginalized groups to ensure inclusive participation and representation. PAR aims to produce practical and applicable knowledge that supports real-world solutions. It also encourages collaborative action, seeks to make findings accessible to all stakeholders and advocates for transformative change, fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement. She positions academic institutions as active stakeholders and collaborators, rather than passive observers. Dr. Balaoing-Pelkmans underscored that everything must be synthesized to produce knowledge, and then eventually transform this into action.

She shared the iterative process of action research as:

- Identifying a problem or area for improvement
- Planning for action
- Taking action
- Collecting data and reflecting

- Evaluation and revising
- Sharing results

She went on to discuss that action research is a process of deepening understanding and expanding horizon which is why according to her in the planned Batchoy stakeholder's forum, the first part is really to get the consensus.

She gave emphasis that action research is meant to bring about change, but this can only happen if there is shared vision, communication, and collective leadership. Problems can then be diagnosed well so that collective action can be taken.

Dr. Balaoing-Pelkmans stressed that action research is needed to solve problems because there are problems that cannot be solved in isolation.

A wicked problem, according to her does not mean "masama," but rather it is difficult or impossible to solve because there may be a lack of knowledge, great number of people and opinions involved, huge economic burdens, and the interconnected nature of these concerns with other problems.

She stated that since problems may be highly complex – people must come together to address vital issues. She explained that since problems can be systemic such that the collective group come from various disciplines "such as history, political science, communication etc. because you need all these to solve the systemic problems."

She explained that problems are evolutionary and dynamic. Based on her presentation, this is because "problems and solutions are entwined as they co-evolve, with the definition of the problem itself evolving."

It is not surprising then, according to Dr. Balaoing-Pelkmans that there is often paralysis - people feel overwhelmed making them unable to act, the status quo is then maintained, and the problem is unaddressed.



# Action Research Theory and Practice

*Ms. Jane Lynn Capacio*



■ **Figure 2.** Ms. Capacio discussing Value Chain

Ms. Capacio started by presenting action research they did on three distinct value chain models: the Farmer Entrepreneurship Program (FEP), the SKK Rice Processing Center, and the Transformational Partnership Model. She also presented examples for each model. Ms. Capacio reiterated what was discussed by Dr. Balaoing-Pelkmans that action research is a process of dialogue where the academe acts as a broker/facilitator.

In terms of the Farmer Entrepreneurship Program with Jollibee, she shared that they are now in Loop 3 which is the Impact Assessment stage. Jollibee Group Foundation would like to know in terms of the investment they gave for the FEP, what was really the impact on the lives of the farmers? How did this program improve their lives? Ms. Capacio stated that FEP partners identified problems in terms of a) why are smallholder farmers' income low; and b) how to bridge the small farmers to institutional buyers like Jollibee. Then they started with data collection and analysis by looking into the value chain and

the related value chain governance structure. The research design was co-developed, and the practitioners became co-researchers.

She highlighted the importance of creating two spaces: the Learning Space and the Partnering Space. The Learning space is a safe space where participants are comfortable to talk and share their ideas and insights. The Partnering Space on the other hand gives “room” for those who are not yet there but who are needed. Usually in the first meeting, the participants attending are called collectively as the “coalition of the willing.” There is a need to further bring the “coalition of the needed,” for successful action research.

Ms. Capacio also shared the results of the action research on FEP. In the context of the goals set in the FEP, they were able to understand the problems and institutional voids. She discussed how their reports on value chain financing contributed to the understanding of informal credit markets and how their models illustrate a formal and inclusive trader-lender relationship.

Ms. Capacio suggested this action research for the Ilonggos' *Batchoy*. Conversations among the stakeholders, with proper documentation, reflection, and analysis, with the corresponding collective action can then lead to address issues with the supply chain and marketing channels.

For the last part of her presentation, Ms. Capacio stressed the importance of documentation and synthesis. It is vital that narratives are summarized. Documentation should be for the science part and the action aspect, including the learnings and realizations/insights. For the research part, an important step is to underpin the narratives to surface incentives and legitimacy. Ms. Capacio also emphasized that it can lead to a ton of qualitative and handwritten data. For the action part, as academics, lessons can be drawn from documentation and sharing of insights, cross-learning AHA moments, and multistakeholder partnering.

Ms. Capacio discussed that with the planned *Batchoy* Stakeholders forum, stakeholders will be sharing their own perspectives after the conversations. It is vital, according to her, that the lessons learned, the consensus, insights, and suggestions are documented. She further explained that partnering spaces should also be documented, because this will propel the next move, specifically as to other players that should be included in the “room.”

As academics, she explained that if they can properly document well, the stakeholders will trust them more as they proceed to the next stage. Ms. Capacio closed with the following quote: “As the stakeholders feel we can be trusted with the narratives that we see, feel, and hear them, yet we are fair; they trust us with the next set of problems. They feed on what the process provides.”

# Summary of Value Chain Overview

*Dr. Anette O. Balaoing-Pelkmans*



■ **Figure 3.** Dr. Balaoing-Pelkmans and Ms. Capacio discussing value chain.

Dr. Balaoing-Pelkmans presented an analysis of different value chain structures, emphasizing the power dynamics and dependencies within each type:

- **Relational Value Chain:** Illustrated by the partnership between Disney and Pixar, this model involves equal power and dependency, with each party equally critical to the relationship.
- **Captive Value Chain:** Examples include Nike and Adidas with their factories, or Vitarich with contract farmers. Here, power is asymmetrical, often leading to an inequitable relationship where one party holds more control over resources and information.

- Hierarchical Value Chain: In this model, exemplified by San Miguel Corporation, a single entity provides all the inputs within the chain, creating a centralized and controlled structure.

Dr. Balaoing-Pelkmans highlighted that relationship dynamics within a value chain can help solve operational challenges. However, a highly fragmented chain may lead to exploitation as more players join the system. In an ideal, balanced market, each participant assumes responsibility for their role, fostering accountability and resilience within the chain.

For transformation within a value chain, collaboration among government, entrepreneurs, and industries is crucial. Market access is especially significant for smaller producers, as it lowers their risk, thus encouraging investment. Ultimately, an effective value chain should attract investment opportunities that allow even the most economically disadvantaged participants to contribute and benefit.

Dr. Balaoing-Pelkmans emphasized the vital role of LGUs noting that in the case of *Batchoy*, the government should lead with the support of academic institutions to foster a balanced, sustainable value chain.

# Discussion and Key Questions



■ **Figure 4.** Asst. Prof. Frances Anthea Redison discussing key points and facilitating the open forum.

## CHALLENGES IN TRANSFORMING TRADITIONAL BUSINESS

During the open forum, a representative of the Iloilo City LGU, Atty. Reinhart Pahila raised a question regarding the challenges of transforming traditional businesses. He questioned the role of academic input in addressing issues within family businesses, particularly if the owners do not perceive any problems themselves. For example, a fifth-generation *Batchoy* business owner might question the need for scaling up when his business has successfully supported his family for generations, expressing reluctance toward change when no immediate issues are evident.

Dr. Balaoing-Pelkmans addressed the issue of social responsibility within business practices. She suggested that established business owners, who have achieved financial security through their enterprises, consider their role in the economic well-being of their suppliers. While these suppliers may struggle to afford basic needs and education, business owners could adopt a socially responsible perspective to uplift the entire value chain.

Asst. Prof. Frances Anthea Redison asked how to apply their action research with Jollibee in the context of the *Batchoy* action research with the Iloilo City LGU as there may be differences in terms of resources and budget utilization.

Dr. Balaoing-Pelkmans replied that for the *Batchoy* research, the LGUs are important as providers of the public goods—infrastructure, incentives etc. and these public goods component should be harnessed. She stated that in a value chain, the problem is that “everyone is responsible, but nobody takes responsibility. There should be someone to take the lead, similar to the FEP, its Jollibee because it’s a big player—once it moves, everybody moves. But in the same way, the LGU also has power, because it has the power of endorsement”.

Dr. Rebuena asked regarding collective leadership as applied among the batchoy owners who are not even organized and do not have a formal association.

Dr. Balaoing-Pelkmans stated having collective leadership is a process. Because they can only act together if they have a common vision and goal. This enables them to band together, going beyond competition. For instance, dialogues with them can lead to shared interest in collaboration to address certain issues on the level of supply for batchoy ingredients.

Mr. PJ Arañador, a consultant of Iloilo City in its bid to be designated as a UNESCO City of Gastronomy, proposed that *Batchoy* producers might deepen their appreciation for their cultural heritage by understanding their role in preserving the history of *batchoy*, encouraging producers to recognize the historical significance of their craft could foster a sense of pride and continuity within the tradition.

## COLLECTIVE ENGAGEMENT OF *BATCHOY* PRODUCERS

Asst. Prof. Redison suggested that a productive entry point to engage *batchoy* producers could be establishing common ground through shared stories and experiences. By opening discussions around the personal and cultural meaning of *batchoy*, participants might more readily connect with the project's objectives.

Mr. Arañador recommended framing business issues as “challenges” rather than “problems,” to avoid defensiveness and foster openness. He suggested offering a venue for participants to share their own narratives, thus creating a collaborative and respectful space for dialogue.

## FUTURE IDEATION

Dr. Balaoing-Pelkmans proposed asking participants to envision their role in the *batchoy* industry five years from now, exploring potential innovations and challenges. This forward-looking perspective could inspire new ideas and a commitment to preserving the cultural and economic legacy of *batchoy*.



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Established in 1985 by University of the Philippines (UP) President Edgardo J. Angara, the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) is the policy research unit of the University that connects disciplines and scholars across the several units of the UP System. It is mandated to encourage collaborative and rigorous research addressing issues of national significance by supporting scholars and securing funding, enabling them to produce outputs and recommendations for public policy.

The UP CIDS currently has twelve research programs that are clustered under the areas of education and capacity building, development, and social, political, and cultural studies. It publishes policy briefs, monographs, webinar/conference/forum proceedings, and the Philippine Journal for Public Policy, all of which can be downloaded free from the UP CIDS website.

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