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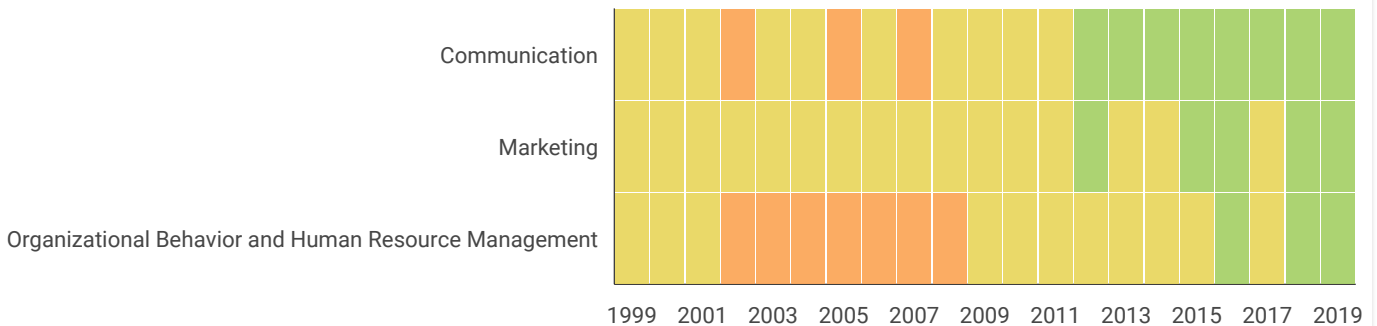
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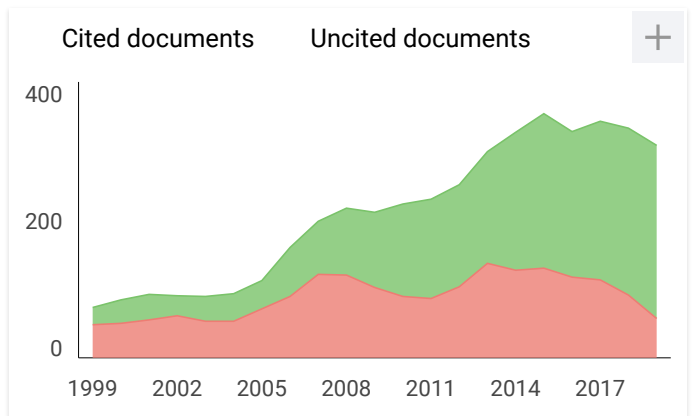
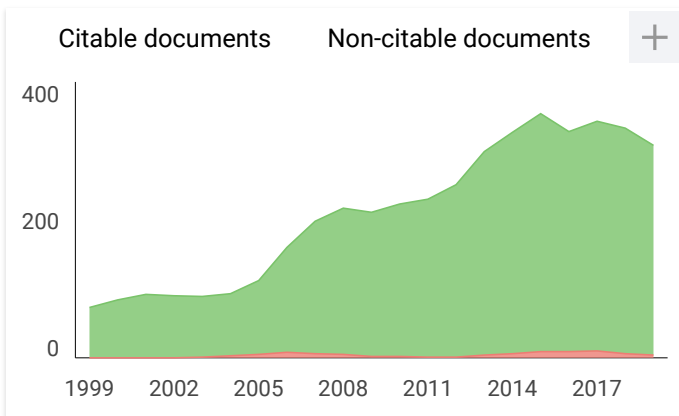
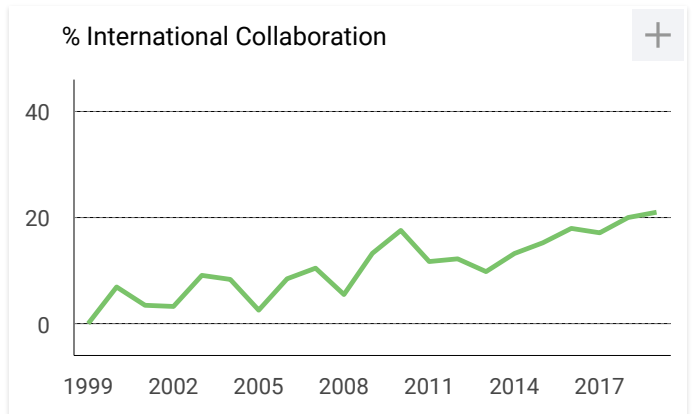
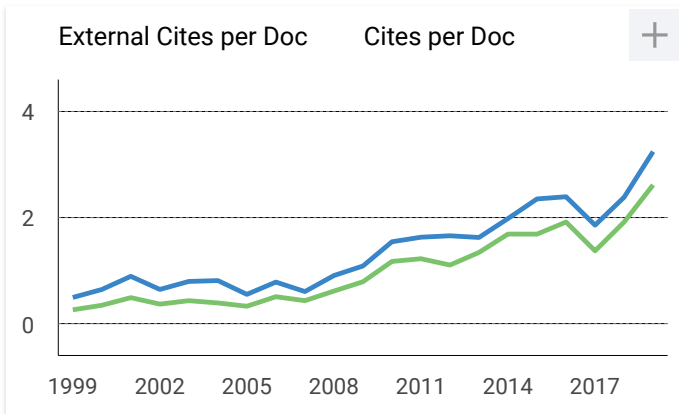
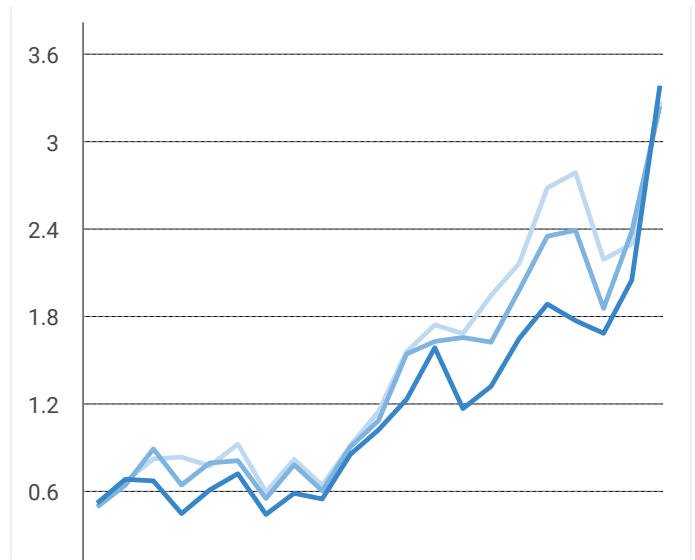
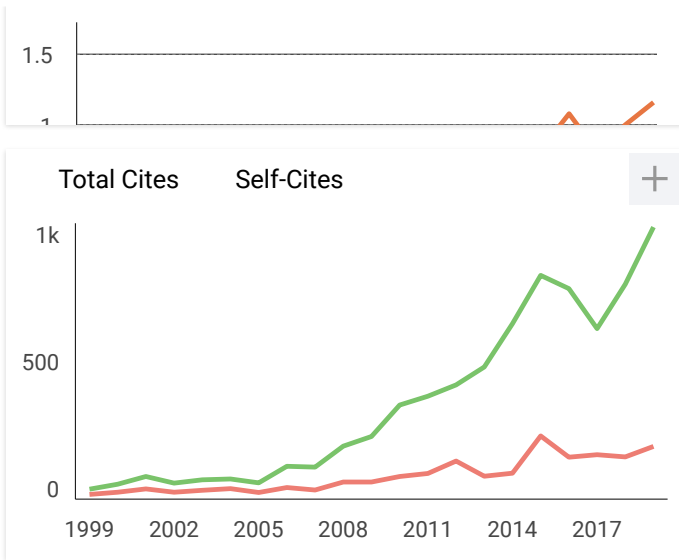


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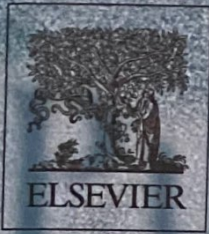
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Full Length Article

Appreciative inquiry for community engagement in Indonesia rural communities^{*}

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ABSTRACT

This article highlights three main issues that challenge the ideal concept of engagement, which are the domination of instrumental perspectives; the lack of global inclusiveness due to ethnocentricity and western orientation of engagement studies; and the domination of post-positivistic paradigm and quantitative research approach. The development of micro-hydro power in Kulon Progo Regency, Indonesia, is chosen as the case study. This study applies an exploratory case study design, involving three hamlets with different level of micro-hydro power development. Through an analysis of the implementation of appreciative inquiry technique for community engagement, this article offers social constructionism and qualitative approach towards studies of engagement. This article also offers public-centric and non-western experiences as a response to the criticism towards organic-centric and western approach of engagement studies.

1. Introduction

Engagement has been conceptualized as an interactive and dynamic process in which meaning is created or co-created through communication to achieve understanding (Johnston, 2018). Engagement is essential to ensure an ethical and sustainable support in a decision-making process. In line with social constructionism approach, engagement is a product of social interactive sense making processes (Heide, 2009; Motion & Weaver, 2005). Engagement will continue to evolve and be shaped by different contexts, such as culture, technology, and public expectations. Accordingly, engagement offers an adequate framework for organizations to understand and respond to their stakeholders' expectations (Johnston & Taylor, 2018).

In spite of this, this article highlights three main issues that challenge the ideal concept of engagement. First, previous studies show the domination of instrumental perspectives, which perceive engagement as a tool to achieve organizational goals with outcomes related to their financial, social, and reputational objectives (Hurst & Ihlen, 2018; Johnston, 2018). This is more organizational-centric approach rather than public-centric approach (Jelen-Sanchez, 2017). It is mostly about how organizations work to engage publics, and shows that engagement can help build relationships (Jelen-Sanchez, 2017; Taylor & Kent, 2014). Meanwhile, as Heath (2018) argues, communication engagement can function fully if the society benefits from it. Engagement needs an understanding of power relations and a commitment to dialogue and community-building discourse (Lane & Kent, 2018).

Second, as a socially situated process, the process of engagement is theoretically as important as the outcomes of engagement (Johnston, 2018). Social-level engagement can be conceptualized as a parallel process of organizational strategy derived from community's values. This social process is communicatively and culturally bound within groups, settings, and contexts, affecting the

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meaning, through interaction and connection during engagement process. Previous studies, however, have been criticized due to their geographical narrowness. Even though the concept of engagement has become a global phenomenon, the studies are short of global inclusiveness due to ethnocentricity and western orientation of engagement studies (Jelen-Sanchez, 2017).

Third, besides their geographical constriction, previous studies on engagement have also been criticized for their methodological narrow-mindedness and “old fashioned” methodological approaches (Jelen-Sanchez, 2017). Most of them are dominated by post-positivistic paradigm and quantitative research, which are considered as a controlled, systematic, neutral and value-free scientific observation approach. As a result, short-term oriented quantitative studies with surveys, content analysis and experiments are commonly used (Rühl, 2008). Meanwhile, as a process where meaning is created or co-created, engagement should be explored using a more comprehensive approach.

Through an analysis of the implementation of appreciative inquiry technique for community engagement, this article offers social constructionism and qualitative approach towards studies of engagement. This article focuses on community engagement, which is a key strategy to incorporate representative community opinions into decision-making (Johnston, 2010). It is part of public engagement domain, which shows practices to bring others into public policy or decision-making processes (Piecicka, 2018). Community engagement can be understood as cooperative and mutually supportive participation in a development process (Jackson et al., 2014; Lane & Hicks, 2014). There was a shift of the development focus from economic growth to inclusion of other social dimensions needed to ensure meaningful and sustainable results (Srampickal, 2006). Cultural values of communities as well as the issues of power relationships are considered in this engagement process.

This article also offers public-centric and non-western experiences as a response to the criticism towards organic-centric and western approach of engagement studies (Dhanesh, 2017; Jelen-Sanchez, 2017). It presents an engagement approach that focuses on communities as the main actors rather than an object of development and views them as living human systems consisting of patterns of belief, patterns of communication, patterns of action and reaction, patterns of sense-making, and patterns of emotion (Lewis, Passmore, & Cantore, 2008). As part of the deliberative method, appreciative inquiry allows communities to be involved in a process through which decisions about what is best for them are made. The analytical component includes discussions on tensions in practicing public engagement (Delgado, Kjolber, & Wickson, 2011).

2. Literature review

2.1. Engagement in public relations

As a multidimensional concept, engagement offers groundwork for building organizational relationships, and guides the process of interactions between stakeholders and organizations (Johnston, 2014). It is a key aspect of organizational behavior in a functioning environment that requires organizations to be more open and sensitive to the meaning and value that grows from interactions with diverse stakeholder perspectives (Dhanesh, 2017). Stakeholders expect to cooperate with organizations and take an active position in communication and co-production of meanings (Jelen-Sanchez, 2017). As such, engagement offers a means to facilitate stakeholder–organization interactions and involvement.

Engagement appears across a wide range of organizational-stakeholder relationships, as stakeholders demand reliable involvement. This has been applied to a variety of stakeholders and topics with various notions of what constitutes engagement (Reed, 2008; Taylor & Kent, 2014). This can mean anything from stakeholders interacting with message contents to participation in decision-making. Many authors view engagement as the interactions of stakeholders via social media (Adams & McCorkindale, 2013; Men & Tsai, 2013, 2014; Wigley & Lewis, 2012). Others link engagement to employee relations in the workplace to increase loyalty and job satisfaction (Lemon & Palenchar, 2018; Tkalc Verčič & Pološki Vokić, 2017). Engagement is also described as part of corporate social responsibility (Wang & Chaudhri, 2009), civic engagement, and social capital (Sommerfeldt, 2013), or defined from a dialogic approach (Taylor & Kent, 2014).

The topics related to engagement and its practices are also wide across policy fields, (e.g. science, health, environment, and climate change), governance fields (public administration, business, and science), and management fields, specifically human relations management. The practices have common features, but are also shaped by their contextual characteristics and practiced in different domains: public, employee, or stakeholder engagement (Johnston & Taylor, 2018). Because of its variable nature, it is important to specify the conceptualization of engagement and the aspect of engagement addressed in this study.

There is a continual growth of interest in this area along with the increasing number of studies and specialized conferences, including a special issue in the Journal of Public Relations Research in 2014, a call for papers on the theme of “Engaging People in Disengaged World” from the 23rd International Public Relations Research Symposium, BledCom 2016, and a related special issue in Public Relations Review (Dhanesh, 2017). The importance of engagement has been further increased by technological development of digital media, especially social media, which offer apparently unlimited opportunities for publics to become engaged with organizations, contents and each other (Dhanesh, 2017). Further, to provide a comprehensive examination of engagement theory and research to advance current thinking in engagement theory, strategy, and practice, Handbook of Communication Engagement, edited by Johnston and Taylor (2018), was published in 2018. This handbook, which includes 37 chapters from 56 authors, conceptualizes and operationalizes engagement expanding psychological and behavioral dimensions at the individual level and generalizing these as group-level influences at the social levels related to organizations and societies (Johnston & Taylor, 2018).

Dhanesh (2017), Jelen-Sanchez (2017), and Johnston and Taylor (2018) classified studies on engagement into four clusters: public engagement, stakeholder engagement, employee engagement, and digital engagement. This article focuses on community engagement, which is part of the public engagement domain. Public engagement refers to a discourse about governance and decision-

making process in different fields, such as science and technology, health, environment, and land use and planning. This engagement focuses on process that enables appropriate citizen involvement, identified as engagement or participation (Pieczka, 2018).

Referring to Lane and Hicks (2014), community engagement can be understood as cooperative and mutually supportive participation in a development process. This is a process of "working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people" (Jackson et al., 2014, p. 1787). It is a practice that fundamentally requires two-way recognition of people's existing capacities to be active claim-making agents and identify/participate in planning effective solutions to challenges they have experienced (Hickey & Mohan, 2004). Effective community engagement encompasses the establishment of positions and strategies to guide empowering interaction and the mobilization of community constituents for decision-making and social action (Jackson et al., 2014).

Despite this ideal concept of public engagement, there are tensions in its practice (Delgado et al., 2011). The tensions revolve around five questions. The first question is "why should public engagement be done?". This is the most fundamental tension that relates to the motivation to engage with the public, whether to achieve a predefined goal (instrumental reason) or to produce a better result (substantial reason), or because it is the "right thing to do" (normative reason) or combination of those reasons? (Stirling, 2008). The second tension is about who should be involved. Should it be all members of the publics or only those who are experts in the field discussed? There is an issue related to representativeness and inclusiveness in public engagement (Chilvers, 2008; Lengwiler, 2008). The third tension is about how public engagement should be initiated. Should it be a top-down organized process by political authorities or a bottom-up grassroots phenomenon? (McCormick, 2007). The top-down approach often limits the inclusion of the grassroots groups. The fourth tension is about the right time to engage with publics. Is it in the beginning of the decision process, in the middle or at the end of the process? The tension here arises from the fact that the concept of public engagement is based on a linear, unidirectional and oversimplified process of organization-public relationships (Wynne, 2006). Meanwhile, the engagement process is often not linear. When each stage begins and ends is often hard to be clearly defined. Finally, the fifth tension is about whether public engagement is a universal or contextualized process. It has been argued that particular context and challenges should be taken into account in analyzing public engagement. In spite of this, participatory models in public engagement are increasingly accepted across cultures, justified on the basis of a general tendency to portray public engagement as a universal element of good governance. The tension here is about how the success of public engagement practices should be assessed, i.e. using contextual or general criteria (Rowe & Frewer, 2005). These five tensions normally interlink and impact each other. More studies are still needed to get a better understanding and reduce tensions between concept and practice of public engagement.

Engagement is often associated with communicative interaction between organizations and their publics (Dhanesh, 2017). Engagement has been treated dichotomously, ranging on a continuum from the notion of engagement as collaboration to engagement as control. Engagement as collaboration, which requires dialogues, is accepted as an ethical form of communication, which is characterized by reciprocity, mutuality, commitment, and openness (Jahansoozi, 2006). Dialogues require equality among interactants and fair sharing of information resources. Nevertheless, true equality between organizations and the public is almost unrealistic for the organizations, because they have to surrender organizational goals and objectives crucial for survival (Stoker & Tusinski, 2006); Dhanesh, 2017).

Dhanesh's study (2017) also emphasizes two additional points from the perspective of publics and organizations. From the public's perspective, engagement is shaped by publics' passivity and issues of salience. Publics will engage through communicative behavior only if they are interested in a topic affectively and cognitively. In addition, referring to the situational theory of public (Grunig, 1997), an individual who is encountered with an issue that is salient to him/her will seek information related to the issue. This information seeker, however, will not always want to communicate with the organization about the issue. Instead, he/she possibly receives information from another source or decides to change a related opinion, attitude, or behavior, which could essentially affect the organization concerned. What this implies is that in defining engagement, it is important to consider multiple dimensions of engagement, including cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of the public, and to reconsider the notion of disengagement (Dhanesh, 2017). Meanwhile, from the organization perspective, the organization's hesitancy to open up and engage in symmetrical dialogic communication with publics and the issue of control also need to be considered in understanding the engagement. Considering these aspects, it is important to think any possible models of engagement, arraying from transactional forms of engagement as control to two-way or multi-way forms of engagement as collaboration (Dhanesh, 2017). One-way forms of engagement are probably most suitable for passive publics, while two- or multi-way forms of engagement are most appropriate for active publics, who own equal power and seek collaboration (Dhanesh, 2017).

Nevertheless, previous studies on organization-public relationships in public engagement show a strong organizational-centric approach rather than public-centric approach (Jelen-Sanchez, 2017). Engagement tends to be treated as a phenomenon that organizations need to strategically manage and use to build effective and positive relationships with stakeholders for organizational benefits (Devin & Lane, 2014). Organizations are reluctant to open up and engage in symmetrical, dialogic communication with their publics (Cho, Schweickart, & Haase, 2014; Lovari & Parisi, 2015; Lovejoy, Waters, & Saxton, 2012), motivated mostly by their need to maintain control of strategic communication (Porter, Anderson, & Nhotsavang, 2015), especially during crises (Ott & Theunissen, 2015). Publics—as the key actors experiencing engagement—have been lacking in the discussion of engagement in public relations (Devin & Lane, 2014; Dhanesh, 2017; Jelen-Sanchez, 2017). Meanwhile, to understand dynamics, dedication, affective and motivational components of engagement as well as disengagement and their relations to trust, satisfaction, organization-public relationships and behavioral intentions, it is important to address engagement from the public's perspective (Devin & Lane, 2014). There is still a need for public-centric research on engagement (Jelen-Sanchez, 2017; Dhanesh, 2017).

The functional approach is valuable in addressing how public relations practitioners can take their role more effectively from the organization's perspective. In spite of this, the singular focus on public relations has tended to eliminate the role of social context in

which the organizations operate (Edwards, 2009; Motion & Weaver, 2005). Alternative theoretical and methodological approaches exploring the complexity of engagement process emerged in early 2000s (Edwards, 2016). Studies start to move from the understanding of engagement as a functional process enacted in an organizational context to socio cultural activity by which the society creates its symbolic and visible reality. Culture in this socio-cultural approach is defined as the fundamental system of meanings shared and learned by members of a certain society over time (Banks, 2000). This approach views public relations as “a social and cultural practice, a profession with its own dynamics that generates discourse in order to shape attitudes, values, and beliefs in the interest of organizations” (Edwards & Hodges, 2011). This socio-cultural approach requires an examination of the context in which actions take place. The context can be comprehended as global, national, and local, depending on the level of analysis.

Previous studies, however, have also been criticized due to their geographical narrowness (Jelen-Sanchez, 2017). The studies were mostly conducted in the US, followed by Asia-Pacific (mostly in Australia and New Zealand) and European countries (focusing on Scandinavian countries and the UK). Only a few countries were represented or studied in the area of engagement. It indicates that even though the concept of engagement has become a global phenomenon, the research is short of global inclusiveness. The ethnocentricity and western orientation of engagement studies are also undeniable (Jelen-Sanchez, 2017). Meanwhile, engagement is influenced by diverse contexts, such as culture, technology and world events, and public expectations (Taylor & Kent, 2014). Therefore, a study conducted in non-western countries is required to give a more comprehensive understanding on how a contextual background shapes an engagement process.

Similar to its thematic and geographical narrowness, previous studies on engagement in public relations have also been criticized for methodological narrow-mindedness and “old fashioned” methodological approaches they employed, since most of them are dominated by post-positivistic paradigm and quantitative research, under the assumption that they guarantee the field to be taken more seriously (Jelen-Sanchez, 2017). Quantitative methods are considered as a formal approach to data gathering because they are controlled, systematic, neutral and value-free scientific observations. As a result, the previous studies were dominated by a short-term oriented quantitative research with surveys, content analysis and experiments as most commonly used research methods (Rühl, 2008). Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative research and interpretivistic approaches are assumed to be informal, standard-lacking, and subjective. The paradigm offers a more comprehensive approach to understanding important phenomena including relationships, culture and meaning-making, all of which are at the core of engagement. Qualitative research can offer a better understanding of an engagement process.

As part of qualitative research, appreciative inquiry is a deliberative method, which aligns with the culture of rural communities which have strong personal and cultural bonds, and who meet frequently to discuss matters relates to them. This method views communities as actors with agency rather than objects of development project and allows them to be involved in decision-making process about what is best for them. This method has also been used in numerous development projects in different parts of the world and is believed to be appropriate for this kind of setting.

2.2. Appreciative inquiry for public engagement

Appreciative inquiry has been developed, based on a study conducted by Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros (2008), in response to the centrality of problem solving in managerial work and the classical action research approach to organizational inquiry and change (Bushe, 2013; Dorieke van der Hosking, 2004). Appreciative inquiry emphasizes the need for generative inquiry and change that help organizations discover what could be, rather than try to fix what is (Bushe, 2013). This is an engagement approach which accentuates the strengthening of organizations' positive qualities than the fixing of their negative qualities.

Cooperrider et al. (2008) published five principles of appreciative inquiry that are widely cited and applied. The first principle is the constructionism approach of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). This approach is based on the assumption that organizations are socially constructed phenomena, which have no tangible reality (Haar & Hosking, 2004). Through the language and discourse of routine interactions, organizational members co-construct their organizations. People create their own realities through dialogue and enactment. The purpose of inquiry, thus, is to stimulate new ideas, stories, and images that create new possibilities for action.

The second principle is simultaneity, which proposes that change occurs the moment people ask a question. This principle suggests that inquiry and change are not separate moments, but simultaneous ones (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). Inquiry is intervention, and perhaps the most effective means of transformation. The third principle is the poetic principle, which proposes that organizational life is expressed in the stories people tell each other every day, and that the organizational story is constantly being co-authored. Organizational life is expressed as a narrative, a grand story, co-authored by various stakeholders. Each person or stakeholder group has a different story. Like poets carefully choosing words to evoke sentiments and understandings, organizational stakeholders choose their language, topics, and metaphors to describe and give meanings to their organizations.

The fourth principle is the anticipatory principle, which affirms that the most important resources for generating constructive organizational change or improvement are the collective imagination and discourse about the future expressed by organization's members (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). It is this image of the future that guides the current behavior of persons and organization. Organizational images of the future are created and occur within the conversations between the stakeholders in the organization.

The fifth principle is the positive principle, which proposes that positive questions lead to positive changes. Appreciative inquiry is based on a simple assumption that every organization has something that works well, and that these strengths can be the starting point for creating positive changes (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Positive views include hope, excitement, inspiration, solidarity, and joy increase creativity, openness to new ideas and people, and cognitive flexibility among organization members (Whitney & Trosten-

Bloom, 2010). Positive questions bring out the best in people, inspire positive actions, and create possibilities for positive future.

With these principles, appreciative inquiry proposes that what people call 'problems' can be addressed by looking forward toward a dreamed future rather than by looking backward toward what is broken and needs fixing. This approach understands organizations as human systems, which differ from mechanical systems (Watkins & Mohr, 2001; Watkins, Mohr, & Kelly, 2013). Appreciative inquiry moves beyond traditional problem-centered methods to identifying and building on past achievements and existing strengths within a community, establishing consensus around a shared vision of the future, and constructing strategies and partnerships to achieve that vision (Duraipappah, Roddy, & Parry, 2006). This approach accentuates the limitations of problem-solving for expanding human horizons and possibilities. Through the act of inquiry, organization members explore what they want and dream about as well as the best way to achieve their dreams, and create their own momentum to achieve a more positive organization (Cooperrider et al., 2008). The process of inquiry is believed to lead to better, more effective, friendly, sustainable, and vigorous social systems, with the assumption that the inquiry involves engagement with those who will ultimately implement change (Bushe, 2011).

The appreciative inquiry process involves four key stages: discovery, dreaming, design, and delivery or destiny (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Mishra & Bhatnagar, 2012). In the discovery stage, organization members are asked to identify the time(s) when the organization was at its best. During the dream stage, participants are asked to imagine their group, organization, or community at its best and an attempt is made to identify the common aspirations of members and symbolize this in several ways. With a common dream in place, in the dream stage, organization members are asked to develop concrete proposals for the new organizational state. Cooperrider called these "provocative propositions" (Whitney, Cooperrider, Sorensen, & Yaeger, 2000). Organization members propose strategies, processes, and systems, as well as make decisions and develop collaborations that will create and support positive change. Finally, in the delivery or destiny stage, organizations begin to establish objectives and action plans that will help them achieve this imagined future.

This approach has been adopted to understand changes in human systems at any scale, from the individual, group, organizational, community, through the national level (Bushe, 2011; Watkins et al., 2013). This approach has also been adopted in evaluation programs of strategic planning and quality audits, as well as for encouraging community support for development projects (Baquet, Hancock, & Narjes, 2008; Cooperrider et al., 2008; Lewis et al., 2008; Messerschmidt, 2008). What previous studies have shown, however, are mainly stories of appreciative inquiry success. There is a need for studies examining the implementation of appreciative inquiry to identify the tensions and factors that shape its outcomes (Bushe, 2011).

2.3. Research aims

Overcoming ethnocentricity and aiming for greater global and multi-cultural inclusiveness in engagement studies would have a strong potential in improving understanding and knowledge about engagement process, as well as diversifying thematic, theoretical and methodological scopes. This article responds to this concern. Based on an exploratory case study on community engagement in the development process of micro-hydro power in Kulon Progo Regency, Indonesia, this article examines the implementation of appreciative inquiry for community engagement. This is part of public engagement to ensure communities' participation in a decision-making process. This article assesses the process of how appreciative inquiry enables communities to participate in the development projects as well as discusses five tensions in practicing public engagement: why it should be done, who should initiate the process, how it should be done, when it should start, and where it should be conducted.

3. Method

3.1. Research approach and case study strategy

This qualitative study employs an interpretive approach. This study maintains that public engagement is socially constructed. Interpretive research aims to formulate explanation that elaborates the way subjective meanings are constructed and maintained in a particular study. As noted by Neuman (2006, p. 90), interpretive approach allows the researcher to discover "what actions mean to the people who engage in them". This approach is also sensitive to the context. Thus, the interpretive approach allows the researcher to understand community engagement from communities' perspectives and to examine how the context shapes the process.

To understand the engagement process and to examine the tensions in its practices, the case study strategy is undertaken. A case study is not a particular method but a strategy for choosing what is to be studied (Stake, 2005). Case study focuses on empirical knowledge of the case and pays attention to the influence of its social, political, and other context (Stake, 2005). The case study allows the researcher to undertake a detailed analysis of the case chosen within their setting, understand it from the participants' points of view, note many different factors that influence the process, and pay attention to how those factors relate to each other (Daymon & Holloway, 2002).

This study employed the exploratory case study method to study three *dusun* in Kulon Progo Regency, Indonesia, with different experiences in engaging with the micro hydro power development project. The case study apprehended the unique experience of each of the three *dusuns* along with their communities' opinions about how it could be improved and their ambitions for the future. The case study also looked for commonalities of experience and responses between them.

This micro hydro power project is part of the Indonesian government's plan to provide electricity to remote rural areas using renewable energy technology. Compared to other renewable energy technologies, micro-hydro power requires more communities' participation to maintain its sustainability. The Indonesian Government's main goal is to encourage rural communities to adopt and exploit micro-hydro technology. This is an on-going project in Indonesia. The technology has been introduced and installed in a

number of communities. However, when the government engages with local communities, they use a scientific communication approach. The government focuses on mechanical aspects of micro-hydro power (Ariwibowo, 2012; Fajarsari, Sulaiman, & Setiawan, 2015; Prasetyo & Hanifah, 2011) and seeks to ensure that the communities know how to install and operate the equipment rather than understand what renewable energy means for them. What is missing here is community engagement that encourages participation from as many stakeholders as possible, addresses communities' concern in the program, and ensures the active role of leaders.

This case was chosen due to three reasons. Firstly, it is because of its problematic situation. As noted by Daymon and Holloway (2002), a researcher may select a particular case since it allows the researcher to focus on problematic situations within the case. This case, accordingly, allows researcher to examine how appreciative inquiry enables and encourages communities to participate in decision-making process, and to understand the tensions in practicing community engagement in the government development project.

Secondly, the case was chosen due to its context. To respond to the ethnocentrism in engagement studies (Dhanesh, 2017; Jelen-Sanchez, 2017), this case provides opportunities to understand how a socio-cultural context shapes a community engagement in a non-Western country. This study was conducted with rural communities in Indonesia. They were characterized by collectivism and have values that emphasize group interests, harmony, and togetherness. The role of key leaders was also dominant. A patriarchal system characterized these communities, in which male communities were most dominant in decision-making processes. As traditional communities, they focused mostly on past and current events, and could easily feel content with what they have today. The communities have also embraced oral tradition over written tradition.

Thirdly, this case provided a context to examine the implementation of appreciative inquiry throughout different stages of development project. As Delgado et al. (2011) asserts, there is a question about when the engagement should be taken: is it at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of development project. The micro hydro power development project progressed through five stages: the pre-initiation stage, in which the government conducted a feasibility study for the project; (2) the initiation stage, in which the government initiated the infrastructure development of the micro hydro power plant; the adoption stage, when communities started to adopt the technology; (4) the transition stage, when the communities were ready to take over the ownership of the micro hydro power; and finally (5) the sustainability stage, when communities already had a full ownership and were ready to exploit the benefits of micro hydro power. The first case study was conducted in Dusun A, which was at the initiation stage. The second case study was conducted in Dusun B, which was at the adoption stage. Finally, the third case study was conducted in Dusun C, which was already at the sustainability stage. Thus, in aggregate, the individual cases represented the full range of stages, providing both current and retrospective perspectives about community engagement in all development stages.

3.2. Data collection

Data were collected through focus group discussion (FGD), which was adapted to the local culture of Indonesian communities. In addition, a small number of individual interviews were conducted in order to set up the FGD and to gain specific in-depth information about particular aspects of the study. Individual interviews were with people who had power and/or specific knowledge and were confident enough to speak with the researcher without feeling threatened. Interviews were conducted in informal settings or in interviewees' homes, and in the local language so that interviewees were comfortable to speak.

The FGDs were more acceptable in *dusun* communities because it aligned better with collective culture. In this study, the participants of the FGD were not selected and the FGD was not conducted in accordance with formal protocols of FGD. Instead, it was carried out with existing community groups' structures and using the existing forums in each *dusun*. The FGD was scheduled by the communities themselves and integrated into the cycle of community meetings. The researcher recognized that there might be issues related to the validity of the composition of the FGDs. However, the appreciative philosophy allows for flexibility when a particular context requires.

Each FGD followed the four phases of the appreciative inquiry cycle as described in the literature review. In each phase, communities discussed the technical, management, and life-enhancing opportunities associated with the micro hydro power installation. They also discussed the accompanying communication. In the first phase, *discovery*, communities were asked to articulate their best experiences in relation to the development projects, including the installation of the micro hydro power plant. In the second phase, *dream*, communities were encouraged to imagine their ideal future when they own and can fully exploit the micro hydro power for their benefit. Ideas and images from the dream phase became agenda items for the next step, the *design* phase. During this third phase, the communities were asked to develop a plan of how they would achieve their dreams. Finally, in the *delivery* phase, they were encouraged to state intended actions to realize their plan and asked what support was needed to convert this into reality.

There were a total of 15 FGDs conducted in the three *dusuns*. The groups involved are shown briefly in Fig. 1.

4. Results

This study reveals that the technical installation of micro-hydro power plant cannot be separated from community engagement. The installation process involves five stages: pre-initiation, (2) initiation, adoption, (4) transition, and (5) sustainability. This study examines the implementation of appreciative inquiry throughout the five stages of government development project, from pre-initiation to sustainability stage. Each stage of the development project defines its specific engagement objectives. The link of engagement process to each stage of the development project cycle is illustrated by Fig. 2.

Using this framework (Fig. 2), the implementation of appreciative inquiry, which involves four key phases: discovery, (2) dream, design, and (4) destiny, is described. The challenges experienced and benefits gained in each phase are also addressed in this findings

Hamlet	Focus Group Discussion (FGD)
Hamlet A	3 FGDs with male community groups 3 FGDs with female community groups
Hamlet B	2 FGDs with male community groups 1 FGD with youth group
Hamlet C	2 FGDs with male community groups 2 FGDs with female community groups 1 FGD with youth group
TOTAL	14 FGDs

Fig. 1. Number of Focus Group Discussions.

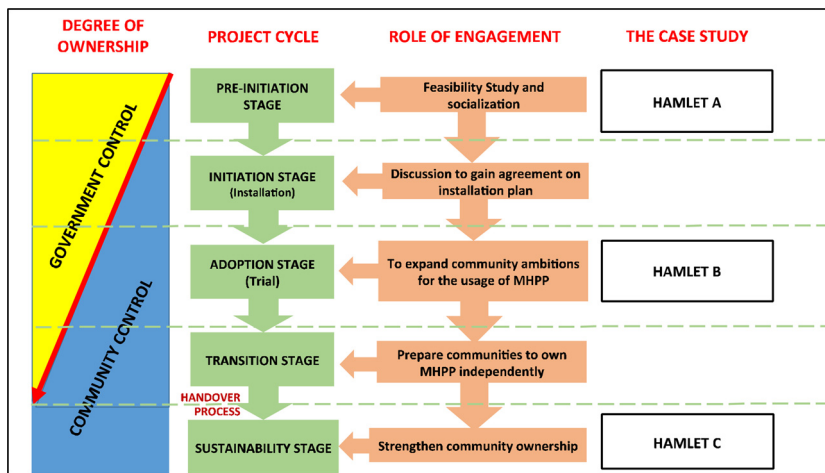


Fig. 2. Installations stages and engagement framework.

section.

4.1. First phase: discovery

In the first phase, communities in *Dusun B* and *Dusun C* were asked to articulate the strengths and best practices they experienced in relation to the benefits of the micro-hydro project. Meanwhile, in *Dusun A*, in which micro-hydro power plant has not been built, communities were asked to share their best experiences with any other government development project they have. Since this was the first phase of the whole appreciative inquiry process, it took time to encourage the communities to initiate the conversation. Trust was the main challenge in this phase. There were two approaches undertaken by the researcher, who was also acting as the FGD facilitator to gain trust and encourage conversation. The first approach was using the communities' native language to start the conversation, while the second was asking them to tell stories about their livelihoods to initiate the conversation. This was like an ice-breaking process. The conversation was often started by communities' group leaders, later joined by other members. Trust was therefore gained. Accordingly, the researcher could continue the conversation and discuss issues related to micro-hydro power.

In *Dusun A*, the communities stated that they trust the government and mostly refer to government project plan they have experienced before as their best practices. As the participants mentioned

“Even though we were not involved during the feasibility study, but we believe that the project will benefit us.” (interview with head of Dusun A)

“Like the other development projects, we believe the government will give something positive for this dusun.” (male group FGD)

In *Dusun B*, in which micro-hydro has been installed for two years, communities have learned about the benefit of micro-hydro power from their neighbours in *Dusun C*. In spite of this, there are some concerns about the cost of its maintenance from the communities: “We perhaps will only be able to cover daily maintenance cost, such as replacing lubricant oil or cleaning up water channel” (Male group FGD)

In *Dusun C*, there are some concerns addressed by the communities. They worried that the micro-hydro power will decrease the water irrigation debit to the rice field, as the participants stated.

“People thought the water volume would decrease if the micro hydro was constructed and would cause drought.” (Male group FGD)

“At the beginning of the project, the Association of Water-User Farmers was worried that the water volume for farming will decrease and impact on the productivity of farming sector.” (Male group FGD)

They also concerned about the cost of its maintenance:

“if the micro-hydro power plant is fully handed over to us without any supports from the local government, we cannot afford it, since its maintenance cost is very expensive” (male group FGD, Dusun C)

Despite those concerns and worries, they still focused on benefits they obtained from this technology, rather than showing a negative attitude or even rejection of the project. To quote the participants:

We are grateful that we gain benefits from the micro-hydro power. We couldn't work at night in the past. But now, we have street lighting that enables us to travel and work at night” (Male group FGD – Dusun C)

It decreases our electricity bill. I usually pay Rp 50,000 for electricity generated from the national grid. But now, I only pay Rp 25,000, since I have an alternative electricity access to micro-hydro power plant. (female FGD – Dusun C)

The researcher observed that the communities had no difficulty in expressing the best of what they have and their experience in conducting government-initiated development programs, including micro-hydro power projects. Sharing the good things they have, such as how they can work at night or how they can decrease their electricity bill because of micro-hydro power, was more acceptable than talking about their problems and negative experiences in group meetings.

4.2. The second stage: dream

In the second stage, the communities were asked to imagine what they dreamed about the benefits of micro-hydro power in their communities. The communities were encouraged to imagine what their lives would be like in the future with the presence of this technology. In *Dusun C*, where micro-hydro power has operated for five years and often had technical problems, community members hesitated to share their dreams or imagine how they would benefit from micro-hydro power in the future. They felt powerless due to their lack of capacity to fix the problems and inability to rely on the government's support. To quote participants' statements during the FGD: “There is no point of dreaming about our future with micro-hydro power, if until now we do not have enough resources and funding for fixing its technical problems.” (male group FGD – *Dusun C*). Even though it was not easy for the communities to start dreaming about their futures, some initiated the conversation by sharing how their daily lives would be in the future, such as how they would feel safer when walking at night due to the street lighting electrified by micro-hydro power, how they imagined the roads would be snake-free, or even how they would develop home industry activities such as ice-making business or laundry services.

Unlike *Dusun C*, the communities in *Dusun A* and *Dusun B* enthusiastically expressed their dreams and explored the benefits of micro-hydro power. They have not adopted micro-hydro power, nor had negative experiences with micro-hydro power. The communities of *Dusun A* believed that as part of government development project, micro-hydro power will provide economic benefits for their future. Similarly, the communities of *Dusun B*, which is located very close to *Dusun C*, admitted that they had learned about the potential benefits of micro-hydro power from *Dusun C*. They dreamed of building tourism spots around the micro-hydro power plant and assigning youth group to manage the spots, as reflected by these statements:

“We still have a lot of plan for the future. We can develop a tourist attraction. We can have garden, waterfall, and build gazebos around the micro-hydro power plant.” (youth group FGD – Dusun B)

“We assign the youth group to manage micro-hydro power and let them to exploit it.” (male group FGD – Dusun B)

The study found that female community member showed positive perceptions, since they felt involved and heard through the appreciative inquiry approach, as shown in their statements: *“It is mostly only male community members that are involved in discussions about micro-hydro power. But now we are happy, since we can share our dreams.” (female group FGD – Dusun C)*

Through appreciative inquiry, women groups felt empowered, as they were also allowed to dream about the benefits they could gain from micro-hydro power. A similar view was also expressed by a youth group: “We are happy that the communities trust us to manage micro-hydro power in the future.”

In communities that still embrace strong traditional values, it was not easy to encourage people to think about future events. Traditional communities tend to think about past and present life. They feel content and satisfied, and thus it is difficult for them to dream about a future that is better than today. In addition, the lack of knowledge about micro-hydro technology as well as financial resources have led to barriers for communities to dream about future benefits of micro-hydro power.

Despite these challenges, appreciative inquiry encourages communities to start moving beyond what they can see and learn today. Appreciative inquiry offers an approach that enabled the communities to imagine the benefits of adopting micro-hydro power in their lives. In addition, appreciative inquiry enabled voiceless community groups, such as women and youth groups, to be heard and involved.

4.3. The third stage: design

In the third stage, the communities were encouraged to articulate a design for achieving their dreams. With a common dream in place, the communities were asked to develop a concrete proposal for their future state. Instead of sharing their thoughts, other

community members appointed these key actors to develop the design for them: “we usually ask our leaders to design the plan, since they know better than us. And we trust them” (male group FGD – *Dusun A*). As a result, only certain community members actively shared their ideas. Conversations were mostly dominated by key actors within the communities, such as the *dusun* leaders or technicians, who understand the operation of the micro-hydro power plant. They also refer to what the government usually does in other development projects as a reference to design the plan, as stated by *Dusun A* leader: “We have experiences with the other government development projects. So, we just need to refer to the development procedure conducted by government.”

Due to its collective culture, the communities tend to appoint their key actors to design the plan to achieve their dreams. A patriarchal system characterizes these communities, in which male community members are most dominant in decision-making processes. As a result, it was hard to encourage women to be involved in this design phase. At the end, however, they were willing to discuss the design to achieve their dreams related to their roles as a housewife.

Despite the dominance of key actors in proposing the design, appreciative inquiry allowed communities to start thinking about a design for achieving their dreams and raising their aspirations. This phase encouraged more people to participate in the decision-making process. In this study, women and youth groups also talked about the design. Accordingly, this introduced a level of empowerment to voiceless groups.

4.4. Fourth Phase: Delivery/Destiny

In the delivery or destiny phase, the communities were encouraged to state the actions they intended to take to realise the design and ask for support. This phase was aimed to ensure that the dream could be realised. In *Dusun C*, despite positive supports for the micro-hydro power project, the researcher observed that the communities were less enthusiastic in articulating their action plan to realise their dreams. This might be due to their previous negative experiences. Unlike *Dusun C*, the communities in *Dusun B* enthusiastically discussed how they will deliver the plan into action. As stated by *Dusun B* leader: “We will assign youth group to take action to deliver our plan. We believe that they are more creative than us.” In *Dusun C*, in which the communities had not been introduced to micro-hydro power, the communities responded according to the more normative steps or standards they had previously experienced rather than proposing a new way to realise their dreams. Since they had not been informed about the micro-hydro power project, they had a difficulty in dreaming about micro-hydro power and even more in developing steps to realise the dreams.

What these findings suggest is that planning for the future is new for the communities embracing a strong tradition. As a result, it was hard for them to think and decide how to achieve their dreams. The traditional communities also tend to follow what they usually do in the past. It is also difficult to break the conservative mindset. Despite these challenges, the researcher observed that appreciative inquiry stimulates enthusiasm in the communities to present concrete steps to achieve their dreams. In *Dusun B*, there was more enthusiasm among community members to develop steps to deliver their design. This phase has inspired the communities to further articulate their proposed design into action plans.

5. Discussion

This study offers an engagement approach to support the shift of the development focus from economic growth to inclusion of other social dimensions needed to ensure meaningful and sustainable results (Srampickal, 2006). This section discusses the findings by looking at five tensions in practicing public engagement: why it should be done, who should be included in the process, how it should be done, when it should be started, and where it should be conducted.

5.1. Why should it be done?

This question refers to the motivation of community engagement (Delgado et al., 2011), whether to achieve the development goals (instrumental rationale), or to produce a better result (substantive rationale), or because it is the “right thing to do” (normative rationale). From the normative rationale, engagement aims to empower communities to participate in the decision-making process, as suggested by normative value of democracy. Despite of its challenges, appreciative inquiry offers technique to fulfill this normative rationale. The focus is on the process to encourage communities’ participation rather than its results.

The appreciative inquiry has put communities as the active actors of engagement and views communities as living human systems. The conversational and storytelling approaches have become powerful and creative sources of energy that empower communities to tell the best things they have in their *dusun*, which then motivate them to imagine their future and consciously develop designs and delivery approaches to achieve their desired future state. The storytelling approach of appreciative inquiry, in which each community member tells as well as hears stories, had a positive impact, making communities more engaged in micro-hydro power issues.

The appreciative inquiry approach is also considered an inclusive model for community engagement. Marginalized voices, such as those of women in this study, are more likely to be heard and received. It is possible that these voices are the ones in which important innovations reside. The inclusion of this approach in community engagement is productive in fostering high-level responses from communities as well as in introducing different frameworks into decision-making process.

From substantive rationale, appreciative inquiry offers a technique that allows a better result, which is a community-shared result that emerges through the process of engagement. Appreciative inquiry focuses on people talking together in various ways to produce a change in their experiences and understanding of the world, and thus in the way they are inclined to act together (Lewis et al.,

2008). Through conversation and dialogue, individual appreciation becomes collective appreciation, individual will evolves into group will, and individual vision becomes a cooperative or shared vision for communities. From a conversation-based perspective, how people talk about the world affects how they see, experience, make sense of, and understand the world, and consequently how they act in it (Lewis et al., 2008). From this perspective, both continuity and change are essentially covered and communicated in patterns of conversation.

The appreciative inquiry technique directs the consideration of communities' strengths and positive experiences. Inquiry into what communities appreciate strengthens their relationships and increases their positive emotions. Focusing on the positive things, rather than the problems, experienced by communities—as suggested in the appreciative inquiry approach—has improved communities' confidence to dream, develop proposed designs, and delivery plans to achieve their dreams. Positive thoughts lead to hope for the future (Ludema, 2000; Ludema, Cooperrider, & Barrett, 2001). The experience of positive emotion encourages people to look and think broadly, to interact with others, to try new things, and to be creative (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005; Gupta & Devalina, 2015; van Wyk, 2016). Meanwhile, the experience of negative emotion tends to reduce people's ability to be creative, socialise, and deal with complexity or take risks.

Through an inquiry process, communities explore what they want to be based on the high moments of where they have been. This approach has led communities to move beyond the traditional problem-centred approach. This approach allows them to identify and build on their past achievements and strengths, form agreements around a shared vision of the future, and build strategies and partnerships to achieve their vision (Duraiappah et al., 2006). As demonstrated in this study, the power of appreciation to achieve change stands in contrast with the belief in the power of criticism to produce change. There is growing positive support among communities to produce change through appreciation. The behavioural changes formed are freely given, rather than products of unwilling compliance. What appreciative inquiry offers is "an approach to human organising and change grounded in the belief that the most effective way to create positive action is through a relational process of inquiry, grounded in affirmation and appreciation" (Baquet et al., 2008).

Even though these two rationales are in line with the ideal concept of engagement, like this study found, the instrumentalism rationale is often more dominant in practice. The inclusion, as found in normative and substantial rationales, may lead to a battle in defining the development agenda among community groups as well as between the communities and the government who initiates the development project. It is arguable that the government has set the agenda, and engagement becomes a means to develop consent or corporation. This can potentially lead to tokenism stage of participation (Arnstein, 1969) to maintain power and control over development programs and to respond to the pressure to be socially responsive. Meanwhile, engagement requires an understanding of power relations and a commitment to dialogue and community-building discourse (Heath, 2018). It is essential to balance various perspectives in decisions through levels of responsiveness. This can be conducted by either recognize diverse perspectives from those who are still empowered or recognize the representation of imposition and incapability (Johnston, 2018).

5.2. Who should be included in the engagement process?

There is a tension to decide the relevant participants for engagement and the criteria to select them. Involving all community members is not feasible. Concern is usually with the extent to which participants can be seen to represent the public (Delgado et al., 2011). When the engagement only includes those who are interested, concerned and informed, this tends to support the inclusion of particular interest groups, which often closes the opportunity of those with a more neutral opinion to be heard (Evans & Plows, 2007).

This study involves most of community groups. However, during the design and destiny phases of appreciative inquiry, in which the groups should develop design to achieve their dreamed goals and decide how to implement the design, only key actors actively involved. Community leaders and those with technical knowledge were trusted by communities to develop the plan. There is a question whether they can represent the whole communities. This can be understood using the normative theory of expertise from Collins and Evans (2007), who observed that while every citizen should be included in political decision-making, only those with some kind of relevant expertise should participate in technical decision-making. Technical decisions are related to the installation of micro-hydro plant, meanwhile, political decisions refer to broader, socio-political aspects of the technology development. As shown in this study, those with technical knowledge background were chosen to support the technical decision-making process. The community leaders who were chosen by communities can represent the socio-political aspects of the technology development.

5.3. How should it be done?

Public engagement can be either framed and arranged by political authorities or more grassroots initiatives (Goven, 2006; Scott-Murdock, Wiessner, & Sexton, 2005). For development project initiated by the government, it is unlikely for communities to initiate the engagement at the initiation stage of the project. As found in this study, during the pre-initiation and initiation stages of micro-hydro power plant installation, the government arranged and framed the agenda of engagement. The communities started to initiatively engage in the micro-hydro power issues during the adoption stage and sustainability stage to discuss the usage and maintenance of micro-hydro power.

The researcher observed that the appreciative inquiry approach inspired communities to move beyond what they could see and learn today. Essentially, within the appreciative inquiry approach the image of their future was built on the grounds of what they knew they could do, such as how they could do more activities at night due to street lighting without worrying about accidentally stepping on a snake, or running a community laundry business. In other words, the imagined future state is essentially both desirable and achievable. It is the beginning of transforming the current story into a new narrative of hope and possibility (Finegold, Holland, &

Lingham, 2002). It is a valuation of imagination and its potential to influentially impact motivation and belief in communities (Lewis et al., 2008). Communities became excited by their imagination and were motivated to achieve desirable objectives. The youth group in Dusun B, for instant, initiated their own meetings to discuss how to manage and exploit the power plant. As such, their behavior became more organized towards achieving the desired future.

5.4. *When should it be started?*

There is substantial consensus on the importance of including citizens at an early stage of technological development (Rowe, Horlick-Jones, Walls, & Pidgeon, 2005). This provides opportunities to disclose communities' concerns, attitudes, and expectations towards the new development. It is assumed that early community engagement is thought to enable a more acceptable and socially robust development (Rowe et al., 2005). The tension, however, remains between varying answers to the question of how early and to how far it makes sense to go. The question is related to whether it is possible to make a clear distinction between stages of basic research for exploring communities' aspirations and applied technological development.

There is a warning if the engagement is initiated since the early stage of the development, especially if the engagement is motivated by instrumentalism rationale. The uninvited or grassroots initiated engagement is less likely to take place. The government becomes more likely to predefine the topics of dialogue and potentially manipulate this to achieve instrumental ends, such as enhanced legitimacy for technological development (Wynne, 2006). As asserted by Greenwood (2007), the engagement can often be seen as an instrument for coopting and manipulating, or as a means to develop consent or cooperation. There is therefore an emerging concern about whether the engagement aims to guide the direction of the development process, or rather focuses on preventing controversies by familiarizing the communities with the technology before it is installed (Rogers-Hayden & Pidgeon, 2007).

This condition was also found in this study. During the pre-initiation stage of development, in which government conducted the feasibility study, the communities were not involved in the feasibility study. The socialization process to inform about the project was initiated by the government. The aim was mainly to gain approval and support from the government. Nevertheless, there was no rejection from the communities towards this process. The lack of knowledge about the new technology developed as well as their conservative mindset have led the communities to accept the decision made by the government.

To get involved in decision-making, the communities should have an adequate knowledge about the new technology developed (Evans & Plows, 2007) On one hand, if this is the case, the government should provide knowledge required, which often has already been framed through the selection of materials. On the other hand, this can be argued that it should be communities' general knowledge about the technology and their view about their future good life that are important to be considered in this decision-making process. As a result, this creates yet another level of tension around how the ideal of early engagement should be carried out in practice.

5.5. *Where should it be conducted?*

Engagement will vary across cultures and systems, since this is a context sensitive process (Johnston & Taylor, 2018). Engagement is a product of situated practices. In line with this thought, it is reasonable to adjust the engagement approaches to suit particular context (Delgado et al., 2011; Johnston & Taylor, 2018).

What this study found is that, with adaptation, appreciative inquiry is a culturally sensitive technique that can be used with rural communities in Indonesia. This offers another perspective from non-western country, which is characterized by strong collectivism. Appreciative inquiry is an appropriate approach for collective culture, which tends to maintain harmony rather than be confrontational. Sharing the good things they have, such as how they can work at night, or how they can decrease their electricity bill because of micro-hydro power, was more acceptable than talking about their problems and negative experiences in group meetings. The conversational and storytelling approach of appreciative inquiry is aligned with the oral culture of the communities.

In spite of the power of conversation as a medium for community change, as shown in this study, there was a challenge in asking communities to initiate the conversation. In collective communities, there is a fear of being perceived as different from the group. Meanwhile, conversation involves people being present as themselves. In addition, people cannot easily detach their emotions from conversation (Lewis et al., 2008). In collective communities, however, people have become trained to manage their feelings by either ignoring or channeling them, rather than expressing them to others. They prioritize group togetherness and interests to maintain harmony. What this finding suggests is that these fears are likely to manifest themselves when conversation is offered as a process to support change. Accordingly, it is important to understand why this should be the case and then work with communities to create a structure for conversation. In this study, approaching key actors and speaking their native language was an approach for gaining community trust and reducing community fears.

In spite of the importance of context sensitivity, participatory model has been justified as a universal element of good engagement (Lane & Kent, 2018; Delgado et al., 2011). As a consequence, the contextual approach of engagement comes into tension with a need for transferrable models that allow for comparisons and standardization of engagement quality. Related to this tension, there are some unresolved issues arise (Delgado et al., 2011), such as how to draw general lessons from engagement practices across countries with different context? Or how to measure the success of public engagement process, is it using contextual or general criteria.

6. Conclusion

Appreciative inquiry offers a more public-centric technique of community engagement. As shown in this study, appreciative

inquiry allows communities to actively involved in the decision-making process of development project. In line with the constructionism approach, the conversational and storytelling of appreciative inquiry has empowered communities to understand the best things they have and to construct their own reality, which then motivates them to imagine their future, and consciously develop designs and delivery approaches to achieve their desired future state. This technique allows communities to understand, feel, and act upon the development process itself.

This study implies the importance of switching from the machine perspective, which focuses on the problem-solving approach, to the living human system perspective. In the machine perspective, publics are treated as objects of the organization, with engagement characterized by transactional engagement based on 'giving-back' through public investment and information. This process relies on one-way communication, in which interaction is occasional and the decision-making process is controlled by the organization. Meanwhile, in the living human system perspective, publics are active actors within a certain context. There is transformational and contextual engagement that allows joint project management, joint decision-making, and co-ownership in the change management process between organization and publics.

Finally, this study argues that the most important forces for change in a development process are new ideas. Appreciative inquiry is more likely to create new ideas, images, and approaches that will lead to social innovations. The initial storytelling that communities engage in, when they describe their "best of" stories, is a key invention of the appreciative inquiry approach and widely considered to be essential for setting the quality of an appreciative inquiry. This can replace an instrumental public engagement approach, which focuses on the message-sender-receiver model of informing communities about change.

In spite of the contribution of appreciative inquiry for a better engagement process, this study recognizes its limitation due to the validity of the composition of the FGDs. The FGDs were conducted with existing forums and groups in each *dusun*, without following the formal protocol of FGD. Nevertheless, the appreciative philosophy accepts flexibility to adapt with a particular context. The researcher considered that this approach enabled the researcher to build trust and obtain the best quality and quantity of data from the community. In addition, by using this approach, the community could speak freely and openly during the FGDs.

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