

## CREATING ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY SETTINGS: THE CASE OF A COMMUNITY-BASED HERITAGE PROJECT IN THE PHILIPPINES

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*This paper illustrates the creation of alternative social and physical settings in one small community in the Philippines in view of the identified collective need to understand its people's history and nurture its heritage. Using the framework for social setting action by Seidman and Tseng (2011), it describes and analyzes the development and struggles of a local historical and heritage organization and its community-based museum project through citizen participation amidst the various social and political challenges they face. An array of human, material and financial resources were solicited and organized, and a number of social intervention strategies were utilized to make possible the realization of the goal to build an interactive museum that will serve as a place for community members to showcase their talents and make their voices heard.*

**Keywords:** *alternative settings, citizen participation, community-based museum*

### 1. Introduction

The project of understanding and promoting local history and heritage have traditionally been relegated to formal educational and governmental institutions in many parts of the world, many of which remain in the realm of the modern society (*Gessellschaft*) and are not as accessible to citizens in traditional communities (*Gemeinschaft*) (Tonnie, 1887). This has inevitably created, rightly or wrongly, the perception that museums and heritage centers are elitist institutions designed to transmit top-down knowledge to particular constituencies (Janes, 2009). This is true in the Philippines where there are numerous and continuing

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support for heritage centers or museums in universities and formal government agencies, both national and regional, despite the need for more common heritage programs in local communities outside of traditional institutions and the recognition of the importance of community participation in cultural heritage management (La Frenierre, 2008).

The potential of community museums and heritage centers to become avenues for citizen participation and social change has not escaped those who work with communities, particularly in places where direct social actions are met with public apathy and fierce, sometimes violent, resistance from the government (Waterton & Watson, 2011). The push for heritage conservation and promotion of local history has also recently gained some mileage due to changes and developments in technology, through which many different social and community configurations have emerged and reemerged which are not necessarily determined by physical geography but based on other factors such as identities, social status, and education (Norris, 2002). The emergence of online communication has reenergized bonds between people from the same communities who may have otherwise found it difficult to reconvene to affirm their commitment to their communities of origin. Through online means, communities who have been disintegrated by modernization and migration have reignited passion for history and heritage in particular (Smith & Waterton, 2009), and concern for the well-being of the community in general. Such is the case of a small community in rural Philippines, Morong, which, like most other traditional communities, is slowly being challenged and changed by globalization, modernity, capitalism and outmigration (Kearney, 1995; Nürnberger, 2012).

This paper describes the efforts of physically distant, but virtually connected, groups of citizens, led by the author who is a community psychologist and was based in the United States, to create and change alternative social settings (Cherniss & Deegan, 2000) to facilitate initiatives for broad understanding of local history and conservation of heritage in their small community. Using the framework for social setting action by Seidman and Tseng (2011), this chapter looks into the development and struggles of a local historical and heritage organization and its community-based museum project through citizen participation amidst the various social and political challenges they face.

## **2. History of the Settings and Their Context**

Morong is an old farming and fishing community just east of Manila, in the Province of Rizal, Southern Tagalog region of Luzon Island in the Philippines. Since the 1850s it was the capital of a Military Political District that bore its name (*Distrito Politico Militar de Morong*) until it was demoted into a regular town, due to low income tax base, at the turn of the 20th century (Mateo, 1955). It has a population of about 52,000 (as of 2010) residing in seven villages (called *barangays*) and has a central governing authority led by the elected town mayor. The presence of schools in the town since the early 1900s made it an educational hub for children from adjoining towns (Teston-Llagas, 2004). There are currently thirteen public elementary schools, 3 public high schools and a state university, and a significant number of private elementary and high schools, and a private college. The majority of the townspeople are Roman Catholic, with significant subsets of the population belonging to Protestant denominations and a number of home-grown churches such as

*Iglesia ni Cristo* (Church of Christ) and the Philippine National Independent Church, otherwise known as the *Aglipayan* Church.

Just like most of the entire Philippine archipelago, Morong experienced more than three centuries of colonial domination and influences from Spain, and more than three decades of occupation by the United States (not including a few years of Japanese rule) (Agoncillo, 1990). Thus, its culture is a cornucopia of mostly Spanish and American influences, yet it retained a language that is decidedly still Tagalog-based, and beliefs, traditions and practices that have indigenous roots (Pascual & Guillermo, 1978). Natives from the community can also be found in the diaspora in many places in the world, foremost of which is in North America where there have been immigrants from Morong since 1910s or earlier. A native of Morong, Private Tomas Claudio, whom the town considers its town hero but not without contestation (Soriano, 1978), immigrated to the United States in 1911 and died in a battlefield in France fighting for the US Army in 1918 during the First World War (National Historical Commission, 1965). Currently, there are about 2,000 alumni of Morong High School residing in North America (US and Canada) alone.

Concerns about the erosion of local heritage and lack of sense of local history have been articulated by townspeople, especially due to the loss of certain community landmarks such as the *Glorietta*, a round structure at the town plaza, which was built in 1912 through donations from the Progressive Youth of Morong in America (PYMA), but which was torn in the 1970s to build a basketball court. Another landmark that disappeared quite recently was the female *fu-dog* structure that guards the entrance of the Morong Catholic Church. The structure was stolen during the height of a storm in the late 1990s. Other historical structures that are just now in memories, photographs and paintings, are the old Morong bridge that was destroyed by the Filipino guerillas during World War II to stop the advancing Japanese soldiers (Pascual & Guillermo, 1978), and the old Morong High School buildings demolished to give way for the construction of modern school facilities.

Not only were historical structures becoming casualties, but centuries old traditions and practices that bring community members together are destroyed by untrammelled commercialism and the disembedding of economics from social relationships (Polanyi, 1944, 2001). Instead of holding wedding receptions in Morong neighborhoods, for example, these are held in modern rented halls, effectively removing many traditional wedding practices that have characterized communities for a long time, such as the communal preparation of food. As also happening in many parts of the world, technological advancements such as gaming have reared children away from traditional community-based games, reducing opportunities for social integration in the community level at very early ages.

Furthermore, local history has not found its way into school curricula, as most historical research and writings in the Philippines have national fervor (Funtecha, 2008). This is happening in light of the centralized national educational plan that has limited the introduction of topics related to local history and heritage, the weakness of local school districts in crafting localized curricula, and the lack of incentives or programs to enhance the latter. Recent developments, specifically the introduction of new basic education curricula under the K-12 program, seek to address these concerns (SEAMEO, 2012). Research on local history has also not taken off due to lack of awareness of local

governments, lack of training of potential historians and researchers, as well as lack of support from the community.

The following section will describe and analyze the development and processes of a community-based organization, LIKAS Morong, and its museum project using the model of setting creation proposed by Seidman and Tseng (2011). It has to be noted that the community heritage organization in focus is relatively young and in its early stages of development and evolution.

### **2.1 *LIKAS Morong as an Alternative Social Setting***

Against the background narrated above, a small group of citizens organized a local heritage organization in 2012 called *Lipunang Pangkasaysayan ng Morong* or *LIKAS Morong, Inc.* The name stands for Morong Historical Society. It was in mid-2000s when the idea of organizing a historical society that will engage community members in matters of history and heritage first came about. Despite the disconcerting changes in the community mentioned earlier, there was no organization, agency or program that was actively advocating for heritage conservation. Attempts were made to recruit potential members using online means, particularly email messaging, but the efforts were not successful. Most of the initial convenors were Morongueños based in the United States and thus, it was challenging as communications were mostly not in real time, there were uncertainties about intentions, and there were no known initiators of similar community-based projects on the ground in Morong. Although there were attempts by expatriates to engage the local government and local teachers, the efforts still did not bear fruits, until 2012, in terms of organizing a viable historical society and establishing a museum for the town. About a year after the online social media site Facebook launched Groups, the author who was overseas created an online Facebook group called Morong Historical Society and invited a few Morongueños residing in Morong and abroad which became the core group of the society. As of 2015, LIKAS has fifty-nine active and inactive members, about a third of whom resides abroad, mostly in North America (U.S. and Canada).

*LIKAS Morong*, as its constitution asserts, is dedicated to the promotion and understanding of Morong history through community-based research, training, and education.” One of its major initiatives is the development of a community-based museum at the center of the town. The acronym LIKAS is particularly meaningful for heritage work as the Tagalog word 'likas' means native. It is also the root word for 'kalikasan', which means nature.

### **2.2 *The Comandancia: The Physical Setting and Resource***

The *Comandancia* is an old Spanish type building, built in 1881, in the middle of the town beside the Morong river to serve as the seat of government of the Political Military District of Morong (*Distrito Politico Militar de Morong*). The building has since been used for different purposes, as seat of the Political Military District from 1881, as schools-- Eastern Rizal Academy and then Morong High School which held classes between 1944

and September 1952 (Teston-Llagas 2004), and as a military garrison during the Japanese period. For a considerable period of time, it was not being used due to constructions and renovations. It was the seat of local government again from the 1980s until 2012, the year the local government administration transferred to a new municipal hall, and a few years after a fire consumed one room and portions of the ceiling and roof.

For members of *LIKAS Morong*, there was no other place to locate the museum but the *Comandancia* because of its historical significance. Its non-use and the seeming lack of plan for utilization after the local government left it for a new building gave the historical organization the impetus to kick-start the ground work to make their intentions materialize after a series of failed meetings with the mayor and town councilors. The idea of a community museum has been at the forefront of *LIKAS Morong* plans at the moment of conception of the organization, despite not having members in the beginning who know how to establish a museum or where to locate it. Heritage conservation is articulated to be accomplished through the establishment of a museum but questions lingered about what to do, who will do, when and where, and how.

The direct citizen actions seemed ripe to happen at the first quarter of 2013 prior to the local elections in May of that year. The current mayor's term was about to end. He was not eligible to run for mayor then, as it was his third term (i.e., the Philippine constitution limits the terms of local officials to three consecutive terms). On February 17, 2013, after the prodding of the author who is the founding president of LIKAS, four (4) individuals met to plan the strategy to create a space for the museum at the *Comandancia* and reengage the then outgoing mayor and town council.

The first step was cleaning the building that started on February 21. Realizing that it was in a very bad shape with dirty floors, garbage strewn around, old, decaying office supplies, falling ceiling, burned walls, stinking toilet, cut electric wires hanging from the ceilings and walls, the four-person team, with the help of a few individuals, painstakingly cleaned the flooring and walls, and collected the debris they could find in various rooms, including bottles of alcohol and cigarette butts from the previous nights' activities of people who use space in the abandoned building for drinking and other questionable activities.

The cleaning campaign went on for several days with the four members and few others who joined them increasingly getting frustrated as they found the spaces they tidied up the previous day to be dirty again the following day, partly because of nightly activities, partly due to exposure of the floor to dust from the debris, and still partly due to unidentified individuals who take from the unlocked building anything they use for whatever purpose (e.g., slabs of wood from the wall or ceiling, door knobs). But they kept on cleaning and organizing the space especially because they invited representatives of the National Museum of the Philippines to visit and do an inspection of the building to determine whether it could still be declared a National Cultural Property under the Philippine National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009 (Henares, 2010). The National Museum officials came on February 21, 2013 but were told that, unfortunately, because the building has been altered more than fifty percent from its original structure and appearance, it does not qualify any longer to the special status. Yet they needed to push the agenda and make something out of the space that they desired to transform. But the question was how?

A decision was made that there would be a small art and culture exhibit to be organized by *LIKAS Morong* and opened on the same day that the organization would be launched. A

coordinating committee with several subcommittees was formed to plan for the event on April 5, 2013. The program would be held in front of the building and the exhibit would be opened afterwards. This, despite not having official response, yet, to *LIKAS*'s request for it to be the steward of the second floor of the *Comandancia*.

### **2.3 Engaging the Community, Engaging the Nation**

As the campaigns for the local election were heating up, *LIKAS* members doubled their effort at preparing the *Comandancia* for the exhibit and the inaugural program. Many more citizens volunteered to help clean up the building and the surrounding areas. Local colleges, which used to have museums, were contacted so that the organization could borrow artifacts and other materials for display. Individuals and groups of artists such as the *Mustra* (which means to ‘show’), a group of young artists from Morong, were invited to exhibit their artworks. A number of private citizens came forward to donate old coins or old documents such as an 1860s *casamiento* or marriage certificate, a clear sign of growing collective interest in conserving heritage and showcasing them for others to see.

A week before the inaugural program, on March 30, 2014, a meeting organized by the *Morong Balikbayan Association*, a group of expatriates mostly from California, who regularly come home for the Christian Holy Week was held. The town mayor who was then campaigning for the vice-mayoralty position, Mr. Joseph Buenaventura, was invited. *LIKAS* saw this as an opportunity to formally introduce the organization and its projects to supporters and potential supporters, as well as to request in public that the mayor sign a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with *LIKAS* giving the latter the stewardship of the second floor of the *Comandancia* so they can transform it into a museum. The mayor promised to consider the request, and on the evening of that same day, the mayor visited the *Comandancia*, talked to *LIKAS* members and said he would sign an MOA.

The major highlight of the inaugural program was thus, the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement recognizing *LIKAS Morong* as the official historical committee of the town of Morong, as well as providing it the stewardship of the second floor of *Comandancia* to be developed into a museum. The MOA also included language that promises support from the local government for the cost of utilities, security and maintenance of the then non-existent museum. The inaugural event, the signing of the MOA, and the opening of the small exhibit took place at the *Comandancia* in the morning of April 5, 2013.

To honor those who have contributed to the study and understanding of the history of the community, the History Award (*Gawad Kasaysayan*) was given to the brother and sister team of Timoteo Pascual and Liwayway Guillermo Pascual, the authors of *Morong 400 Years*, a local history book that was published during the quadricentennial celebration of the founding of the town held in 1978. Another award (Youth Award or *Gawad Kabataan*) was accorded to Alexie Corbilla, the current Executive Director of the museum. His award reads:

Mr. Corbilla is an all-around, world class artist who is extremely well versed in Morong history and culture. He is a visual artist, musician and historian rolled into one—he is a Renaissance man. His Midas-like ability to

transform ordinary materials into colorful tapestry of visual and musical products reflects the high quality of his creative mind. But above and beyond his artistic ability is his quiet, selfless commitment to the town of Morong, as is revealed in the very long hours of leading *LIKAS* members and non-members alike in transforming the *Comandancia* into a topnotch museum, a place that Morong will be known for in the years to come. Furthermore, Mr. Corbilla is an exemplary role model for the young people of Morong. His willingness to share his talent to the younger generation and for the common good is truly impressive. With the *GAWAD KABATAAN* award, *LIKAS Morong* sets the bar high in giving awards to young people and shows the community that it is very serious in recognizing talent that is generously shared with many.

To add legitimacy to the historical society and the occasion that is meant to recognize its existence as a viable community organization, it invited the Chair of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP) who came and gave the keynote speech. Another guest who came and graced the affair was an official from the National Museum, lending credence to the organization's pursuit of building a community museum. Knowing that there would be a new set of government officials a few months after the inauguration, *LIKAS* also invited all the candidates for Mayor, Vice-Mayor and town councilors. The candidate who won as the new mayor during the election the following month, in May 2013, Armando San Juan, was present during the inauguration. A representative of national media was also present.

#### **2.4 *Beyond the Inauguration: The Future of the Morong Community Museum***

Since the successful inauguration of *LIKAS Morong* and the opening of the exhibit, *LIKAS* has ventured into other activities that sought to strengthen the organization, educate the members, build networks, and pursue the development of the community museum. These activities included team building exercises led by a friend in the community who is an organizational development trainer, field trips to various art galleries and museums, launching the regular informal conversations about local history and related topics (called *Huntahan*), publication of a literary folio (named *Away Away*), affiliating with the Local Historical Committees Network (LHCN) and participation in its annual meetings, and attendance at the workshops to learn about establishing community museums.

Immediately after the launching of *LIKAS Morong* and the two-week exhibit, the second floor of the *Comandancia* was renovated, following the completion of the renovation of the first floor a few weeks before April 5, 2013. This was already planned and budget secured by the outgoing town leadership long before the series of events that led to the signing of the MOA. It took more than 8 months for the completion of the renovation. During this period, the organization lost one of its founding members, McLarry San Antonio, who succumbed to kidney disease at the age of 40. His artistic talent and dedication to the society inspired the members to make possible his dream to create a summer arts workshop

for children, the Annual McLarry San Antonio Summer Arts Workshop, the first of which was held in May 2014 and was named in his honor.

By the beginning of 2014, the layout of the museum was made available to the public through Facebook and strategies and timetable were developed so that the installation could start. It took another 6 months for construction to begin due to uncertainties regarding the position of the new municipal leadership regarding *LIKAS'* stewardship of the building and the local government's allocation of budget for the utilities, maintenance, and security of the building. In the middle of 2014, a rumor floated that half of the second floor is being offered by the local government to be rented as an office of the Department of Agrarian Reform to generate funds for the town and according to officials themselves, to pay for the utilities of the building (i.e., electricity and water) which, still according to them, was quite exorbitant during the past several months prior because of over-utilization. They reported that the local government finds it hard to justify spending for *LIKAS* because of the then current national scandal involving fake non-government organizations to which unscrupulous politicians funneled public money (Doronila, 2013). This led, according to the local officials, the Manila-based Commission on Audit to become very strict in its auditing procedures and suspicious of any support to organizations or agencies outside the realm of government.

Upon hearing these rumors, *LIKAS* mobilized its members and set a meeting with the new mayor, Armando San Juan, to discuss the issue. On July 21, 2014, several members led by Vice President Felino Angeles went to the municipal hall armed with a letter from the president and a set of talking points for the dialogue with the mayor. The group reiterated the importance of a museum for the town and the request to respect the substance and spirit of the MOA. The mayor expressed that nothing has been decided yet regarding the plan to rent the space and that any decision needs to go through the town council. During the period that the rumor was circulating, a few members posted online, some in more confrontational manner, their disappointment with local officials for not respecting the MOA and for considering renting half of the second floor to an outside agency. The meeting with mayor and the online postings might have had an effect on the decisions of the local government as *LIKAS* never heard of the issue again since the day of the dialogue.

In July, 2014, the development of several sections of the museum finally began after hiring a master carpenter and 2 assistant carpenters. An active fundraising campaign to collect one million pesos to cover cost of materials and labor for museum development had begun. Solicitation letters were distributed amongst friends, relatives in the Philippines and abroad, particularly in US and Canada where there are *LIKAS* members to receive donations and to send them to the Philippine-based Museum Installation Fund Committee. Groups were also tapped like neighborhood organizations, professional societies, alumni classes, families, and other groups. Friends from neighboring towns also contributed as well as colleagues and friends of members who have never heard of the organization or its museum project.

### **3. A Framework for Understanding and Influencing Social Settings**

Building on the original work of Rappaport (1977) on the primacy of small groups and organizations as locus for action and research for community psychologists, Seidman and



Tseng (2011) conceptualized social settings as systems consisting of three major dimensions that are in dynamic transaction with each other. These are 1) social processes between people or groups of people; 2) resources including human, economic, and physical resources, and 3) organization of resources, which refers to their prioritization and allocation. Beyond a description of these dimensions, the framework also suggests ways of influencing social settings, or strategies to alter dynamically different aspects of social settings toward the improvement of the setting or foster the development and well-being of people within the setting and those whom they serve. The dimensions and strategies will be summarized below and their applications to LIKAS Morong will be discussed later in the chapter.

### 3.1 Social Processes

The central way through which individuals experience settings, social processes are patterns of transactions between individuals or groups of individuals, including norms and practices. Akin to the concept of social regularities, social processes can be seen in one or more of three major domains: norms, interactional patterns and practices, and participation. Norms are common beliefs that guide behavior of individuals and groups, interactional patterns and practices are the observable actions between people that occur regularly over short or long period of time, and participation is the presence of individuals or groups in settings or the rate with which members of a setting interact with one another. New organizations, such as *LIKAS Morong*, may be more directive in forming norms, practice and rates of participation for its members. Whether these processes evolve over a long period of time or programmed over a shorter one, they mutually influence each other.

From the earlier narrative of events, one can glean that a community can be seen as a continuing process of social interactions between members to meet their collective goals. Processes may be repetitive (such as the informal history-telling sessions) or a progression from previous interactions (such as the formal meetings with the mayor), which are both directed toward advancing the larger goals of the community organization. In the case of *LIKAS*, norms have been evolving, albeit slowly, based on articulated beliefs and formal policies as well as informal and unstated rules of engagement related to interpersonal relations, leadership roles, financial management procedures, and membership rules. These on top of existing indigenous expressions of dealing with other members of the community in relation to age, gender, economic status, place of origin and other relevant demographic and situational factors. The formal structure of the organization, with committees designated for certain autonomous functions, has not fully been operational as systems and relationships are still evolving, and leadership skills still being learned.

While norms may still be evolving, there seems to have been a revolution of practices as members had become prolific and competent in initiating, repeating and completing tasks based on organizational goals. Among the formal practices that have become important are the holding of programmatic but informal conversations about local history (called *Huntahan*), the mounting of exhibits, the structured meetings and the monitoring of revenues and expenses. Still there are a number of informal norms or practices that have evolved such as the adoption of the name *KaLIKAS* (which means fellow LIKAS member)

to refer to each other, the use of Things-to-Do lists during committee meetings, and the regular practice of saying gratitude for tasks successfully performed.

A major currency that seems to have been recognized by most members is *'tiwala'* or trust. *'Salamat po sa tiwala'* or 'Thanks for the trust you put in me' is a very often read expression of gratitude by members who have been assigned to do tasks or appointed to committees. It implies both the awareness that other people recognize one's abilities, and the readiness to accept the responsibility. Trust seems to hold together the heritage community, aside from the overall vision of a citizenry aware of its local history and common heritage, without which the community organization will crumble.

### 3.2 Resources

Human, economic, physical, and temporal resources are important for meaningful outcomes of heritage programs, although they may not be sufficient. What is critical is that they become catalyst for producing changes in social processes. Human resources refer to individuals who inhabit the settings and the characteristics of these individuals. Physical resources pertain to the availability and quality of space and facilities, training materials, and technology. Economic resources refers to financial resources such as expenditures in programs or facilities development or maintenance, and temporal resources refers to the amount of available time such as used for training, and preparation for programs. Among the resources of *LIKAS Morong* are its members and the historical building at the center of the town, the *Comandancia*, a big section of which it has successfully transformed into a museum.

Among the members of *LIKAS Morong* were artists, politicians, doctors, teachers, housewives, youth, and senior citizens. The various skills that the organization's human resources bring to the table contributed to its long list of accomplishments during the first two years of existence as a formal organization. The combination of these skills and talents, and the outcomes from their synergy generated considerable attention thus, the organization became the go-to for organizing municipal exhibits -- they have designed and mounted several exhibits since April 2013. The inactivity of several members, though, proves to be a challenge for the organization, as there are certain projects left undone because of lack of active members on the ground to make them happen. The lack of experience, skills and confidence of many members in the area of fundraising also stop them from contributing to this endeavor.

While in the beginning there were uncertainties regarding the appropriation of space at the *Comandancia*, the organization has had a tremendous leeway and was successful in its mission to define it as THE museum site. The processes of cleaning, naming, utilizing, lighting, and celebrating it all contributed to meaning making (Prilleltensky, 2014) and creating a common public space dedicated to local history and heritage. The other spaces around the *Comandancia* have also been useful in pursuing the mission to promote local culture including the use of the town plaza for the Christmas Bazaar and Festival that was launched in December 2013.

The social resources around *LIKAS Morong* have been very critical in the development of the community organization and the pursuit of its goals. These resources include the

members' families and friends, as well as local, national and international networks, both formal and informal. The members' families and friends had been very supportive of the initiatives of *LIKAS* with many of them contributing direct physical help in setting up programs and exhibits, as well as indirect help through monetary contributions or other services. For example, a brother of a member conducts team building exercises *pro bono* while a sister of another member designed the organizational logo. The involvement and support of other local organizations like schools and volunteer, expatriate, teacher, professional and senior groups in town also add to successful accomplishments of projects and programs. Furthermore, the larger networks and institutions on a national scale such as the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP) and its timely creation of the Local Historical Committees Network (LHCN) of which *LIKAS Morong* is an original member added political legitimacy to the organization's claim of being the town's municipal committee for local historical and heritage work. While the National Historical Commission of the Philippines has been responsive to the needs of the organization, another state agency which *LIKAS Morong* has initially identified as a resource for training its members in museum-related work, the National Museum has been at times cold and unsympathetic, although after the dogged insistence of the organization, it sent a representative just before the opening of the museum to train its members and some local teachers and their students in museum guiding.

Finally, regarding financial resources, *LIKAS Morong* has depended on donations of private citizens and small organizations locally or abroad. As *LIKAS* is a relatively young organization, it is limited in its ability to tap grant money especially in the Philippines where the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), for example, require evidence of three years of audited financial report (Fontanilla, 2014). There have been a few rounds of financial solicitations including the initial one for the inauguration and small exhibit on April 2013, the Christmas Bazaar and Festival in December 2013, and the third one for the Installation of the Museum and the Grand Opening on April 2015. In all rounds there have been considerable outpourings of financial support from members of the community. The first two rounds generated a little more than half a million pesos (around \$12,000), while for the third round the target was a million pesos (approximately \$25,000). There are also plans to tap corporate support for larger donations that can lead to establishment of trust funds. The organization understands the limitations of fundraising and thus has plans for developing revenue streams that will support and sustain the organization and the museum's operations. This includes opening a souvenir shop for museum merchandise, holding other revenue generating events such as art sale and auction, cultural shows, and developing and submitting grant applications to private and government agencies.

### 3.3 Organization of Resources

The ways in which people, space and time, are arranged, and money is allocated in a setting reflects the organization of resources. Social organization refers to how people are grouped, time organization is about scheduling, and physical organization to arrangement of space and elements therein.

Perhaps as important as the availability and development of resources is the question of how they are organized which have been previewed above. While the leadership provides the vision and overall strategies, the committees, especially on the ground, are the ones who make things happen. These committees are permanent or project-based. The six committees, headed each by a chair, are Museum and Historic Sites, Library and Archives, Communications and Publications, Education, Finance/Ways & Means, and Membership Committees. Examples of temporary committees are those for anniversary program in April, launching of literary folio in June, or Christmas Bazaar & Festival in December, all of which happened in 2013. As mentioned earlier, there has been a challenge mobilizing the committees due to the still centralized decision making and the pattern of behavior and expectations that was established early during the first year of organization when everyone was involved in almost everything, without clear delineation of tasks, partly due to the fact the organization was smaller then and the activities were limited to a few numbers. With the increase in membership, it was deemed necessary to create smaller interest groups in the form of committees to take care of the various specialized functions of the organization.

While the allocation of time to be used for many different activities has not been consciously deliberated on, members are now beginning to focus on specific assignments and tasks of their committees, and thus have their own time frames to use. In the past, large amounts of time have been used for meetings, preparation of space for exhibits and programs, the latter including the regular storytelling sessions (*Huntahan*) and now, for monitoring the development and installation of the museum. Time is allocated for team building as well as networking with local, regional and national organizations. A sizable chunk of time is utilized by a number of members, including those abroad, in raising funds. An interesting challenge related to time is the time zone differences between member who are located mostly in the Philippines and the various states in the US and the Philippines, particularly the 12-hour difference between the Philippines and the US East Coast and the 15 hour difference from the West Coast. Thus, there have been confusions with respect to the time of online meetings.

With a relatively new organization like *LIKAS Morong*, which does not receive any financial support from local or national government or private organizations or foundations, funding its activities and programs is a huge challenge. As cited earlier, *LIKAS Morong* is exclusively dependent on donations from private citizens and small community groups and organizations. Most of the money it collected for the first two years were used for supporting members' participation in training and education programs, in preparation and implementation of planned activities and projects, and in developing the museum -- the expenses for the latter is mostly for materials and labor. Its emphasis on education and training fills the need to equip the members with knowledge and skills related to local history and heritage conservation as well as create opportunities for social interactions and team building. The activities and projects are designed to promote local history and heritage to the public. The largest portion of the budget is dedicated to the development of the community museum for which a team is assigned to monitor the receipt of donations and disbursement of funds.

### 3.4. *Influencing Social Settings*

More than just a description of the aspects of social setting, the framework suggested by Seidman and Tseng (2011) enumerates a number of fundamental approaches and related social intervention strategies by which these aspects of the settings may be altered. These approaches are 1) reduction of inequity, 2) utopian ideals, 3) professional development, 4) data-driven, and 5) regulatory. The intervention strategies used under each approach are listed on the table below.

**Table 1. Approaches and Strategies for Social Setting Action (adapted from Seidman & Tseng, 2011)**

<b>Approaches</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
Reduction of inequity	Grassroots organizing, consciousness raising, advocacy/litigation
Utopian ideals	Creation of alternative setting
Professional development	Education/training, coaching/mentoring
Data-driven	Feedback, participatory research, experimental social innovation
Regulatory	Policy legislation, administrative order

While the above approaches may be different from each other, actions in social settings often use strategies from more than one of them, with some strategies being utilized as tactics. And while the strategies may be distinct, they often bleed into one another (Seidman & Tseng, 2011), which can be seen in the case of LIKAS. Some of these strategies bring new, or modify, resources, such as advocacy/litigation and policy legislation while some change social processes such as grassroots organizing and creation of alternative setting. As argued by Seidman and Tseng (2011), the change in resources will not so much have a significant impact on the setting if there is no accompanying change in social processes. When the historical society and museum were being organized, the author and the founding members have maintained that their efforts will be successful only if the following are present: 1) a critical mass of society members who are well aware of the importance of community history and heritage and its potential role in educating themselves and the community toward increasing their well-being and quality of life; 2) a sustained program for educating and training members to enhance organizational and social skills including team building sessions, research and writing workshops, and even informal meetings to further build the members' sense of community; 3) a sustained set of interactive activities and events for the museum patrons and supporters; 4) a local policy that would legitimize the role of LIKAS Morong and the use of the physical space for interactive museum work and events; and 5) a viable local and external network that will strengthen the society's position in pursuing its objectives.

The major strategies being used by LIKAS to set in place these components toward the long term goal of effecting changes in the community, as can be gleaned from the earlier narratives, are grassroots organizing and creation of alternative settings, with policy advocacy, legislation and education as tactics. While it is still too early to conclude about the outcomes pertaining to the society and museum's long-term sustainability and benefits to the larger Morong community, the short-term outcomes have been encouraging. As implied earlier, a critical resource for the then budding organization, and even now is the internet, especially its Facebook group. Through grassroots organizing online and on the ground, what started as a loose collection of individuals residing in Morong and abroad interested in local history became an organized set of citizens with shared aspirations to

promote the study of local history and conserve community heritage. The organization took shape as officers were identified and selected, and visions, missions and goals were crafted. This period was also characterized by intensive meetings and trainings, to make sure that relationships were built and processes were established, and that resources such as material and financial resources were used efficiently toward the satisfaction of the society's goals.

After continuous mobilization and advocacy, even with the change of government leadership, and after two memoranda of agreements – another one was signed on April 5, 2015 – the town council and the new town mayor finally approved an ordinance in the summer of 2015 giving LIKAS the legal authority to manage the public space that the organization transformed into a museum. The museum has since become a regular setting for exhibits and workshops, the *Huntahan*, and has seen the launching of joint programs and projects between LIKAS and local schools. These events sought to further educate both LIKAS members and the larger community, including community leaders, teachers and students. The organization has, however, not been able to expand its membership to include more people from outside the center of the town to become more representative and inclusive, showing the limitation of its organizing activities due to shifting foci from managing the society to developing the museum. This shows that gaining resources can sometimes impede the planned alteration of social processes when there are not enough people to fill several roles required to manage the operations and activities within the settings.

#### **4. Conclusion: Nurturing Community Heritage through Advocacy and Creation of Alternative Settings**

Despite all the challenges and difficulties, *LIKAS Morong* successfully pushed the development of the museum and opened formally on April 5, 2015, two years after the inauguration of the organization and the small exhibit that marked its stake on the building. The museum was named the “*Museong Pambayan ng Morong*” or Community Museum of Morong and its preamble was proudly displayed on its front lobby (see Figure 1 below). LIKAS also successfully lobbied the local government to create and approve within a few weeks after the formal opening of the museum an ordinance giving the organization the legal stewardship of the community heritage center.

As illustrated in this article, a wide array of strategies were applied to engage the Morong community from within, simultaneously altering social processes and practices, resources and organization of internal and external resources described above -- toward the successful establishment of a community museum. The synergies between these three factors produced incremental outcomes that are seen as successes in the organization's drive toward community heritage conservation. Without altering the social processes and organization of resources toward the creation of alternative social and physical settings (Cherniss & Deegan, 2000; Seidman & Tseng, 2011), it would have been more difficult to reach the milestones it has achieved, and it would have been even more difficult to engage the people from the community, including those overseas, who care about their heritage.

**THE COMMUNITY MUSEUM OF MORONG:  
Home of Local History and Living Heritage**

*The museum is from the community, for the community – the tableau of life and history of the people of Morong, the vessel of our knowledge, the altar of our dreams and aspirations.*

*The museum is home to our living heritage – it illuminates yesterday, today and tomorrow, a reflection of the soul of the community in the form of art and literature, and faith in the Creator, and a source of our meaningful education.*

*All citizens of Morong have a voice in the museum, regardless of age, gender, education, economic state, faith, political belief and parties, and place of residence or origin. This includes all barangays (villages) and sitios (neighborhoods) in Morong, schools, churches, organizations, or groups of people who have something to communicate or present.*

*As home of living heritage, it will unite the citizens through exhibitions, celebrations, workshops and other activities that will strengthen the sense of community of the people, residents or those overseas, toward a more prosperous and progressive community.*

***We are offering the Community Museum of Morong to future generations of Morongueños, to all Filipinos and citizens of the world who have deep and abiding love for their own communities.***

*Opened to the public on the 5th of April, 2015.  
Lipunang Pangkasaysayan ng Morong (LIKAS Morong), Inc.  
Comandancia  
Morong, Rizal, Philippines*

**Figure 1. The Preamble of the Museum**

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