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"Rehearsing Inclusive Participation Through Fishery Stakeholder Workshops in the Philippines"

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Participatory methods in "conservation for development" projects regularly fail to live up to expectations of social and environmental change. Stakeholder workshops are an ubiquitous example that can reproduce rather than challenge inequality and exclusion. Technical tools used in workshops, like maps, games, and computer models, are criticised for unjustly privileging expert/scientific viewpoints over other perspectives. Iris Marion Young's theory of communicative democracy is an insightful and robust framework to examine how people interact in the workshop "contact zone," and how to bring workshops closer to participatory ideals. Young identifies four communication modes critical for inclusive participation: greeting, rhetoric, narrative, and argument. We apply her framework to a case study of fisheries stakeholder workshops in the Philippines, demonstrating its utility and cultural applicability. The workshops used a game-based computer modelling tool to structure discussions about coastal management. Qualitative analysis of video data shows how stakeholders signalled resistance, garnered sympathy, influenced outcomes, and established relationships through Young's modes of communication. Based on this analysis, and using concepts from Philippine psychology, we conclude that workshops have potential as "rehearsal spaces" for inclusive deliberation, particularly when they encourage improvisation and humour, rather than rote adherence to standardised activities. (Text from authors' abstract)

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