



Alliance building as a communicative action by anti-mining advocates in the Philippines

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Abstract

As we assert the role of communication as an empowerment tool (Rowlands, 1997) and perceive how effective democracies depend on an understanding of the sources and mechanisms of public discontent (Matejova, 2023), this study mainly focuses on how communication enables alliance building of environment advocates, especially in a deeply polarized issue of anti-mining as applied by *Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM)*. In gathering the data, a combination of procedures was employed to capture a rich picture of the phenomenon: (1) document analysis, (2) participant observation, (3) photo-elicitation, and (4) in-depth interview. Data analysis was performed by following the steps in grounded theory. The findings of this study are presented in a theoretical model that demonstrates that the advocates' communicative approach is a complex process consisting of motivations of the advocates for joining in the campaign, intervening conditions, use of various communication strategies, and outcomes, which are all constitutive to how alliance building as communication for development operates.

Keywords: Anti-mining, Advocacy, Communicative Action, Environment, Alliance-building, SDG 13: Climate action

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Introduction

All cultures, whether contemporary or pre-modern, are centered upon communicative practices, which are crucial for not just establishing contact and exchanging information but also for sharing experiences and engaging in dialogue (Paerregaard, 2020). Communication for development facilitates inclusive debates on environmental, social, and political challenges that hinder social development (Sager, 2016), and an important component to ensure its success is alliance building. Consistent with the very values of development communication as being purposive, pragmatic, and value-laden (Flor, 2013; Quebral, 1988), it is when the stakeholders of an organization are brought together to achieve a joint and strategic public advocacy program. Servaes and Malikhao (2012) describe advocacy as a “key term in development discourse,” aiming to foster public policies that are supportive of the solution of an issue or program. The ultimate goal is to influence public policies, reforms, and new progressive legislation offering solutions to the problems that affect the population (Sager, 2016). As Wilkins (2014) put it, the communication process must be strategic, resonating with the broader field of communication and social change in which interventions are conceptualized and implemented toward a public good.

Mining, on the other hand, as a development issue has a two-pronged impact-- positive and adverse. The extractive sectors have faced substantial criticism due to their negative impacts and participation in notable social and environmental controversies. In the case of Espinar in Peru, the locals reported that the state expropriated their lands and the community suffered from the undesirable environmental impact of copper mining (Glennie, 2005). Sairinen et al (2012) stressed that while mining contributes to economic growth, the unequal distribution of its benefits and instability can be the root causes of conflicts. However, in recent times, these sectors have aimed to address unfavorable perceptions and have adopted the fundamental principles of sustainability. This is the reason why mining, as a development issue, will always have a strong propensity to disunite and cause conflicting and contrasting positions.

Environmentalists claim that the economic benefits obtained from mining are greatly outweighed by the severe environmental impacts of the industry (e.g Haddaway et al., 2022; Khobragade, 2022; Philippine Misereor Partnership Inc., 2020). Several environmental studies

show that the impact of mining includes erosion; loss of biodiversity; contamination of soil, groundwater, and surface water; and formation of sinkholes (e.g Hitimana & Nsengiyumva, 2024; Jhariya et al., 2026; United Nations Environment Programme, 2018). All these negative impacts have been known to have long-term irreversible effects that can harm present and future generations. These negative impacts have led the Philippine government to mull over the total mining ban and permanently halt all mining operations in the country (Rañada, 2018).

Even before the national government took direct actions to regulate the mining industry stringently, various non-government organizations (NGOs) had already been working on the ground to counter the continuous operation and further expansion of mining companies in the Philippines. One example of this is the *Alyansa Tigil Mina* (ATM), a network of NGOs with on-ground support from various people's organizations (POs) and other civil society groups opposing the aggressive promotion of large-scale mining in the Philippines. The organization was born out of the collective concern against the impending threat of the mining industries' revitalization as pro-mining machinery was gaining momentum over the last few years. ATM mainly works at various sites across the Philippines in areas where communities resist the destruction of land and livelihoods by mining activities.

Studies on mining in the Philippines have been conducted. However, these studies focused on mining's impact on the environment and the people (Baustista, 2012; Canencia et al., 2015). There is a lack of exploration from the communication perspective, especially of anti-mining advocates about their experiences in the advocacy. The primary objective of this study is to examine the communication strategies or initiatives employed by environmental advocates in addressing societal challenges, particularly within the context of development issues like mining. It aims to explore how these efforts contribute to the establishment of robust networks among partners and stakeholders who are aligned in their pursuit of what is deemed to be a public good.

Review of Related Literature

Building strong network through communication

Pastor et al. (2010) defined alliances as sustained groupings that develop a frame based on shared values, maintain a link with a real and broad base in the community, and build for a long-term transformation

in systems of power. Alliances tend to fill four functions for those who participate: (1) information and resource sharing, including the development of materials for popular education; (2) strategic dialogues and relationship building, including the creation of a deeper political consciousness about the work; (3) leadership development, including the acquisitions of new skills; and (4) joint actions and campaigns, including victories that move policy and build power (Pastor et al., 2010). According to Dewar et al. (2008), there is also a recognition that alliances can create development impacts, above and beyond specific activities, by demonstrating working models of public-private partnerships in countries with limited multi-sector alliance experience.

In the Philippines, a key insight from local alliances is that building community-based partnerships is essential, as it underscores the limitations of working in isolation to achieve meaningful change. To ensure these partnerships remain effective and engaged, Gormley and Guyer-Miller (2007) emphasize that alliances must implement a strategic communication plan—one that keeps stakeholders, partner organizations, and other vested parties informed about progress, learning, and accomplishments. Thus, communication is a very critical factor for alliance success as it collects information about the trustworthiness of each partner, helps to manage potential conflicts, integrates potential differences, and promotes coordination between different levels of hierarchy (Russo & Cesarani, 2017). Niesten and Jolink, (2015) also argued that an alliance is more likely to succeed when partners are able to manage the information flow through open communication as it promotes a better and mutual understanding regarding rules, obligations and develops a shared model to work together. Spralls et al. (2011) added that regular sharing of information about day-to-day managerial operation promotes coordination and encourages development of mutual commitment toward the achievement of common goals. Thus, to enhance alliance success likelihood, it is necessary that information sharing among partners is timely, open and that feedback is credible and accurate.

However, according to the Movement Strategy Center (MSC, 2013), not all initiatives should just be alliances; rather it should be “strategic alliance” and not a single issue or short-term coalition. For MSC (2013), a strategic alliance is a grouping of organizations (some that may be networks or coalitions themselves) that hold a common long-term vision, have a high level of political alignment, and agree to work and

strategize together over time. The overarching purpose of alliance building is to coordinate and align base building groups to influence the national landscape by groups and individuals operating in a “We” frame of mind, organizational affiliations and attachments to specific vehicles which becomes secondary to achieving shared goals.

As Gormley and Guyer-Miller (2007) emphasized, the health of an alliance is no different from the health of any other dynamic organism; it is only through preventative maintenance and regular check-ups that overall well-being and productivity can be sustained. Consequently, the work of movement building is also the period where many alliances adjust their structure to better fit the work (Russo & Cesarani, 2017). The core question is whether the alliance goes for culture building or culture shifting which can be both simple and complex (MSC, 2013). Alliances become important organizational formations in an environment where funding is receding and resources are scarce, as they afford individual organizations the opportunity to engage in collective, strategic, and efficient use of resources (Benjamin, 2012).

The role of non-government organization in social change

During the 1980s and 1990s, there was a rationale for the reconsideration of the top-down approach which then led to the adoption of a decentralized approach. It was argued that decentralizing government activities would lead to greater efficiency and by transferring decision-making to the more local level, people would be able to have a greater say in the decisions made about their services (Willis, 2011). On this basis, civil societies could act as hubs to facilitate a process of development and bring transformation to the society.

The shift from a top-down approach to more decentralized and participatory forms of decision-making has coincided with the rise of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The term NGO typically refers to a not-for-profit, voluntary group formed by citizens at the local, national, or international level to address issues that promote the public good.

As NGOs have taken a leading role in participatory development initiatives, the concept of participation has gained prominence as a strategy for empowering local communities with greater influence and decision-making authority (Willis, 2011). In this context, McIlwaine (1998) observes that although civil society encompasses a diverse range of actors, NGOs are frequently regarded as the principal “vehicles” or

“agents” of civil society, particularly in development discourse. NGOs have been delivering social services which the government is unable or sometimes unwilling to provide (Kim, 2000). They are capable of building coalitions in addressing bigger problems or issues which affect the more general public. For many years, NGOs have played an important role in implementing various types of commodity-based development that offer a long-term solution to poverty.

According to Willis (2011), NGOs are often regarded as the answer to the perceived limitations of the state or the market in facilitating “development” for a range of reasons. First, it is argued that NGOs can provide services that are much more appropriate to local communities because they work with populations at the grassroots to find out what facilities are required. In addition, they can react more quickly to local demands and provide services more efficiently and effectively because of their scale of operation and their linkages with local people (Green & Matthias, 1995).

Beyond service delivery, NGOs also play a significant role in shaping public policy and promoting democratic values. Mercer (2002, p. 6) highlights three key reasons why NGOs are seen as instrumental in fostering democracy. First, they offer a platform for individuals outside of state institutions to express their views. Second, their close engagement with marginalized communities enables them to advocate for services that genuinely reflect grassroots needs. Third, NGOs serve as a counterbalance to state authority by voicing dissent and encouraging accountability. In this way, NGOs not only facilitate development but also drive social change and protect individual rights by monitoring, critiquing, and influencing both governmental and market policies (Kim, 2000).

Lewis and Kanji (2009) explained that due to their relative informality, NGOs are said to be more flexible and innovative in their activities wherein they are quick to find out the needs of people, recognize injustice, and respond to tackle those issues (Lewis & Kanji, 2009). Lewis and Kanji further emphasized that this becomes an evidence of why NGOs are thought to have a strong commitment to social transformation whether it is explicit or not.

Edwards and Hulme (1997) claims that NGOs have, therefore, been interpreted as being the answer to all development issues, or what has been termed “the magic bullet”. They are often considered to have significant contributions to empowerment, promote participation

among people, and are regarded as the solution to development problems. Today, NGOs throughout the world have grown exponentially in number because of the perceived need to provide alternative ways of living for communities that are unreachable by government support (Edwards & Hulme, 1997).

Moreover, the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in facilitating social change, particularly in the context of development issues like mining, underscores the importance of communication as a catalyst for collective action and advocacy. NGOs serve as key actors in mobilizing communities, fostering participatory decision-making, and advocating for policy reforms that address societal challenges. Through their grassroots initiatives and collaborative efforts, NGOs play a crucial role in amplifying the voices of marginalized communities and advocating for their rights support (Edwards & Hulme, 1997).

Communication serves as the cornerstone of NGO activities, enabling them to engage with diverse stakeholders, mobilize resources, and raise awareness about pressing issues. By facilitating dialogue and consensus-building, NGOs empower communities to voice their concerns and participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Moreover, communication enables NGOs to bridge the gap between policymakers, civil society, and grassroots organizations, facilitating the exchange of ideas and fostering collaborative partnerships for social change.

A fact sheet on mining in the Philippines

The Philippines is the fifth most mineralized country in the world and has one of the largest reserves of gold, copper, nickel, chromium, iron, bauxite, marble, and limestone among others (Rovillos et al., 2003). The country's long tradition of mining can be traced to as early as 400 B.C. to 250 B.C., a stage when other metals such as iron and bronze became known in Philippine prehistory (Caballero, 1996). Its mining industry is composed of four stages namely: 1) exploration; 2) development and construction; 3) utilization and commercial operation; and 4) decommissioning, final mining stage, and rehabilitation.

In 1995, President Fidel Ramos signed into law the Philippine Mining Act or the Republic Act No. 7942 which was designed to revive the mining industry and attract more foreign investment by defining the agreements for mineral exploitation and provide the requirements for acquiring mining rights (Raymundo, 2014). The Philippine Mining

Act of 1995 is the main legislation that governs the exploration, development, utilization, and processing of all mineral resources in the country and includes various measures to protect the environment and defines areas in which mining can be allowed. It also allows 100 percent foreign ownership of mining projects through the Financial or Technical Assistance Agreements (FTAAs).

The mining and quarrying industry contributes foreign currency through the exports of mineral ore and other processed and semi-processed mineral products and provides employment to communities in far-flung areas where the only source of economic activity is mining operations. Its contribution to the country's total exports is at 4% and 0.3 % for non-metallic manufacturers (Chavez, 2017). In terms of poverty alleviation, mining has the highest (48.7%) poverty incidence of any sector in the country.

Meanwhile, the Philippine mining industry's output which was measured in terms of gross value added for the year 2010 was estimated at P143.4 billion and the sector's contribution to the economy was roughly 1.7 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) (DOLE, 2012). In addition, it is also a source of both direct and indirect tax revenues for the government. That is why since 2004, the government has been promoting over 60 mining, exploration, and processing projects, which collectively could bring up to \$14.8 billion in investments until 2013 (DENR-Mines and Geosciences Bureau Report, 2009).

Further, in the same year, the Supreme Court of the Philippines declared the mining act to be constitutional, paving the way towards its full implementation while 14 provinces had promulgated ordinances banning open pit mining (Raymundo, 2014). On the other hand, according to Chaloping-March (2014) the ebb and flow of the Philippines' Mining Act of 1995 demonstrates that the passage of a mining law is simply the beginning of another process of negotiating claims and counterclaims of many stakeholders.

On July 6, 2012, Executive Order No. 79 was issued by President Noynoy Aquino, which sought to strengthen the protection of the environment, promote responsible mining, and provide a more equitable revenue-sharing scheme between government and private firms. There are about 40 metallic mines and 62 non-metallic mines operating in the country with a total of 1,473 mining applications under process as of 2016 (Chavez, 2017). Recently, the country's mining industry was once again challenged after former Environment Secretary Gina Lopez

ordered the closure of about 23 mining operations and the cancellation of a total of 75 mineral production sharing agreements (MPSAs) in watersheds; followed by the President's warning on mining after former Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu suspended small-scale mining operations in the Cordillera Administrative Region.

Mining as a polarized issue

According to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR, 2016), the Philippines is recognized as both a mega-diversity country and a biodiversity hotspot. For the longest years, the mining industry has played a very significant role in the pursuit of industrial development by providing mineral resources which serve as raw materials for manufacturing, construction, as well as in transportation and communications, and in providing employment for workers (Chavez, 2017).

Even though the industry has the potential to increasingly rake in billions of pesos, it has no bearing on the country's domestic economic development. In fact, during the fourth quarter of 2012, the mining and quarrying sector contributed a mere 0.2% to the overall economy, bringing the overall impact of the sector on the GDP to a 0.1% contraction (Lowe, 2013). The net foreign direct investment inflows to the Philippine mining sector for the year 2011 was at negative \$240.4 million, which indicates a greater amount of mining investments moving out of the Philippines relative to the investment coming in (ASEAN Secretariat & United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2012). According to the Mining Industry Statistics (Mines and Geosciences Bureau, 2013), over the 1997 to 2012 period, the share of minerals and mineral product exports to total exports remained low ranging from a minimum of 1.5 percent in 2002, to a maximum of 6 percent in 2011. This implies a significant decrease in exports of minerals and mineral products over the past 15 years.

Amidst a crisis over environmental concerns and growing opposition, the country's mining industry has become more aggressive in protecting its economic interests. Through neoliberal policies such as the Mining Act of 1995 and Executive Order No. 79, the industry is foreign-dominated, export-oriented, and pays no heed to external costs to the people and the environment.

Despite the crucial role of the Mining Act of 1995 in providing environmental parameters and ensuring the welfare of the host

community, it has been challenged by a number of protests over alleged violations of many mining companies. In 1996, 1.6 million cubic meters of toxic waste from Marcopper Mine in Marinduque spilled into the Baoc river (Cinco, 2020). In 2005, Lafayette Mining Corporation's Rapu Rapu mines in Albay was responsible for cyanide spills, acid mine drainage, and toxic heavy metal pollution, resulting in massive fish kills along the fishing grounds of Rapu Rapu island and the adjacent municipalities on the eastern coast of Sorsogon (Regis, 2012). In July 2012, the Nicua Mining Corporation operating in MacArthur Leyte, released mine wastes, resulting in a large fish kill in the rich fishing grounds of Lake Bito (Gabieta, 2012).

The fact that mining cannot be done without affecting the land, water, and air is already a big issue to consider. In addition, mining has been a subject to a number of concerns too because it has severe impacts on people's health, food, and environment. Mining structures can also cause displacement of people, social divisiveness, and disasters that can happen from the cutting of trees, siltation, erosion, and accidents. All of these are translated into public costs (Monsod, 2014).

Alyansa Tigil Mina as a social movement for a mining-free Philippines

Alyansa Tigil Mina or ATM is a non-government organization composed of anti-mining groups in the Philippines. The alliance was formed out of the need to create a watchdog-type organization composed of anti-mining advocates. According to ATM, they are concerned that the government has shifted its policy on mining from that of "tolerance" to "aggressive promotion," with the issuance of Executive Order 270-A, last January 2004. For them, despite the apparently benign policy statements outlined in EO 270-A, a thorough examination would uncover its true intention not to foster sustainable development through responsible mining, but rather to promote large-scale environmentally damaging mining by facilitating foreign investment in the mineral industry.

The alliance places human rights at the core of its mission, emphasizing the protection of both communities and individuals. By shifting from a model that emphasizes mineral extraction and mining profit to one that emphasizes mineral management for national industrialization, ATM claims that it will support national

industrialization while simultaneously promoting local sustainable development and building resilient communities.

In the context of mining in the Philippines, communication plays a pivotal role in shaping public discourse, raising awareness about the social, environmental, and economic impacts of mining activities, and mobilizing support for alternative development models. NGOs like ATM utilize communication strategies such as advocacy campaigns, community outreach initiatives, and media engagement to amplify the voices of mining-affected communities and advocate for policy reforms that prioritize human rights and environmental sustainability.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Theory of Communicative Action (1981) by the German writer and philosopher Jurgen Habermas (1984). This theory is based on an assumption that language is implicitly social and inherently rational. According to Habermas (1984, as cited by Akotey, 2015), the central tenet of this theory posits that members of society strive to achieve mutual comprehension and coordinate their actions through rational discourse, consensus-building, and collaboration, rather than solely pursuing their individual objectives through strategic action.

Communicative action refers to the actions taken by individuals to foster shared understanding within a group and encourage cooperation (Habermas, 1984). In this context, when two or more actors engage, they form a connection and strive to attain mutual comprehension regarding the situation and their intended actions, with the aim of coordinating their behaviors through agreement (Habermas, 1984).

From this basis, the Communicative Action Theory proposed to investigate the reason inscribed in everyday communicative practice. Therefore, communicative action blends the practice of argumentation, reflection, and understanding, which seeks freedom from coercion and the imposition of ideas that impede creativity and critical knowledge. It can also be characterized as a type of social action that through intersubjectivity, it aims at autonomy (Ferreira, 2017). Habermas (1984) underscored that while language serves as a means of communication, communication encompasses a broader spectrum. He delineates “communicative action” as a form of interaction orchestrated through speech acts but not synonymous with them (Akotey, 2015).

Aimed at describing the advocates' communication strategies, this study assumes the organizations and advocates who participated in establishing ATM were capable of acting and speaking in discussions for the communicative action to take place. Thus, to explore the role of communication in anti-mining advocacies and dredge out meanings as the informants ascribe the nature of their experiences, the theory of communicative action was used as the theoretical backdrop of the study.

By emphasizing the inherently social and rational nature of language, the theory highlights the importance of fostering shared understanding and cooperation among stakeholders, which aligns closely with the objectives of alliance-building and advocacy work. The inclusion of Habermas' distinction between strategic action and communicative action adds depth to the analysis by highlighting the role of genuine dialogue and consensus-building in fostering collective action.

Furthermore, the study's application of the Theory of Communicative Action to explore the communication practices of anti-mining advocates demonstrates a nuanced understanding of how language and discourse shape social action. By focusing on the intersubjective nature of communicative action and its pursuit of autonomy and freedom from coercion, the study acknowledges the complexities of advocacy work within contested spaces such as the mining industry. This theoretical framing allows for a deeper exploration of how anti-mining advocates navigate power dynamics, engage in dialogue, and mobilize collective action through communication strategies. By grounding the analysis in Habermas' insights into the role of language and discourse in shaping social action, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how communication influences collective efforts to address complex societal challenges like irresponsible mining.

Research Methods

Research Design and Selection of Respondents

The researcher considered a grounded theory design for the study. Since this is a qualitative inquiry, the researcher becomes the ultimate research instrument. The concept of the "researcher as the instrument" accentuates the distinctive function of the researchers' knowledge, perspective, and subjectivity in data acquisition (Barrett, 2007). This means that the researcher is responsible for analyzing the data,

developing descriptive codes for patterns in the data, and inductively generating larger themes that will emerge from iterative passes through the records. This also implies that the researcher is responsible for interpreting what the data mean and relating these interpretations to other sources of insight about the phenomena, including findings from related research, conceptual literature, and common experience (Barrett, 2007).

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the National Coordinator of Alyansa Tigil Mina. Following the approval, informed consent was also obtained voluntarily from all research participants. Before agreeing to participate, they were given the opportunity to read the consent form thoroughly and were allowed sufficient time to ask questions, express any concerns, or discontinue their participation. The participants were made aware that the interviews would be recorded and that all data would be treated with confidentiality.

In determining the informants of this study, purposive sampling was used. The criteria for choosing the informants were: (1) active members of ATM who were directly involved in the planning and implementation of the organization's programs and activities; and (2) staff of ATM's member organization who have direct involvement in networking with other organizations. This study involved 29 informants. Seventeen of them were female and 12 were male. Informants consisted of coordinators, communications officers, advocacy officers, and council of leaders.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data needed for this study included interview documents, artifacts, interview transcripts, and field notes. In gathering these data, a combination of procedures was employed to capture a rich picture of the phenomenon. A four-step process of data gathering technique was done systematically to include both primary and secondary data. The study followed these steps in data gathering:

1. **Document Analysis.** Following Bowen (2009), document analysis was used to provide the researcher with background information and broad data coverage within the research topic. This method helped the researcher point to questions that needed to be asked (for the research interview) or situations that needed to be observed (during the participant observation).

2. **Participant Observation.** Participant observation was employed for the researcher to discover social scenes in the actual field. As Bernard (2012) emphasized, participant observation allows researchers to gain an intuitive understanding of the meaning of their data. Thus, this technique was useful for the researcher to avoid self-report biases and obtain a more valid knowledge of the area under study.
3. **Photo-Elicitation.** The photo-elicitation technique is the use of a single or set of photographs as a stimulus during a research interview (Collier, 1957). This method was intended to spark meaningful conversation and evoke a different kind of information from the informants.
4. **In-Depth Interview.** Right after the photo-elicitation interview, an in-depth interview followed. This method served as an extended discussion, which included questions not covered in the photo-elicitation interview.

Data Analysis

This study was carried out based on grounded theory methodology developed by Glaser and Strauss. This is an inductive approach where theories emerge from the data through analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Meaning, the researcher develops a visual model at the end of the study from the obtained data to support the topic being studied (Creswell, 1999). Specifically, the grounded theory approach used by Gandomani et al. (2014) was employed for this study. This is consistent with the original supposition of Glaser and Strauss (1967) that utilizing this analytical approach will ensure that the generated theory from the study will fit the phenomenon under investigation.

Text scanning was done after the completion of an interview. The interview data were transcribed, scanned, and broken down analytically using line-by-line text analysis. Since the data covered a wide range of answers from the research informants, the key texts were grouped based on the interview questions. General questions included the participants' background and experiences, while subsequent questions covered the challenges faced, strategies or solutions taken, and outcomes. In this process, key points were identified based on the transcripts and were compared continuously with occurring interviews for similarities and differences.

Open Coding and Constant Comparison. The codes represent the essence or features of the key points. A total of 124 open codes were extracted from 18 interviews using the line-by-line analysis in open coding. Several codes emerged from just a single section of an interview transcript because the codes ranged across various topics. This means that the researcher kept the initial codes close to the data. Open codes were then grouped into a more generalized cluster and were assigned with conceptual labels. From the 124 open codes, 21 concepts were generated.

Axial Coding. Data were reduced through systematic comparison, and concepts were arranged in appropriate classifications capturing significant ideas called “categories.” The process of axial coding specifies the properties and dimensions of a category and reassembles the data fractured during the initial coding to give coherence to the emerging analysis (Creswell, 1999). From the 21 identified concepts, five categories emerged.

Theoretical Coding. The identified categories were then unified around core conceptual variables such as intervening conditions in alliance building, organizational activities incorporated under communication strategies, and specific outcomes. In a process called theoretical coding, the researcher assigned constructs to these variables, and linkages between the categories were established to develop a theoretical model.

Results and Discussion

Motivation for joining the advocacy

Informants were asked about their background experiences to surface the conditions that motivated them to join the anti-mining movement. Responses by the informants revealed five key motivations of why they were inspired to become part of ATM, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Informants' motivations for joining the Advocacy

Motivations	Description
Protecting the environment	Witnessing how mining operations were destroying nature, informants said that joining an anti-mining campaign is important in stopping further damage to the environment.
Defending human rights	According to the informants, they joined the alliance because they believe that mining violates human rights, and defending it was their duty.
Supporting the IPs	Informants believed that the mining industry dramatically affects the indigenous people as it displaces them from their ancestral domains. For them, joining the alliance was an expression of helping the IPs fight for their rights.
Seeking help	Some informants were once fisherfolk and farmers affected by mining who sought help from the organization. Informants said that their drive to join the alliance was their first-hand experience of being victims of irresponsible mining.
Ensuring a future for the next generation	In joining the alliance of the anti-mining campaign, informants noted that it is their responsibility to ensure that there are enough resources left for the next generation.

Intervening conditions

Through grounded theory analysis, the researcher was able to identify intervening conditions that inhibit alliance building and discouraged the informants from joining the campaign.

Table 2

Intervening conditions in alliance building

Intervening Conditions	Description
People's apathy	Informants described alliance building as a continuing process wherein the goal is to widen the network by involving more people. According to them, apathy makes it very challenging to encourage people to join the fight against mining because it makes people less concerned about the situation. After all, they are not directly affected by mining or have not seen its impacts yet.
Corporate Intimidation	Informants reported that mining companies have the power to divide people and intimidate anyone who tries to go against them.
Government apathy	Some informants admitted that when the government ignores them, they feel disregarded and that their efforts were useless. Moreover, informants said that the government's attempt to disregard and ignore the movement is another challenge in networking as it contributes to the growing culture of apathy among the people.
Loss of members	Informants identified that members' death and resignation discourage some individuals and other organizations from joining in alliance building. If others perceive them that way, alliance building becomes challenging.
Different prioritizations	Informants noted that sometimes in an alliance composed of different organizations, unity becomes unclear as it splits the focus into a diverse agenda. According to informants, different groups have different priorities, which leads to conflict and disunity.

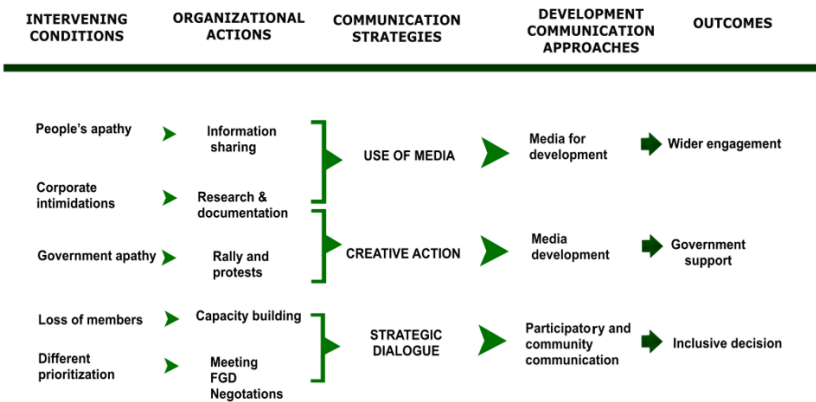
Communication strategies used in alliance building

The intervening conditions in alliance building triggered the anti-mining advocates to adopt some communication strategies. Through grounded theory analysis, three key communication strategies emerged. These are (1) use of media, (2) creative action, and (3) strategic dialogue. Under each strategy are specific actions carried out by the informants in building a strong alliance. For the use of media, (1) research, (2)

process documentation, and (3) information sharing were incorporated. Creative actions included (1) rallying and protests and (2) research and documentation. Strategic dialogues were in the form of (1) regular and emergency meetings, (2) focus group discussion, and (3) capacity building. The figure below shows the theoretical code of categories generated after a series of constant comparisons.

Figure 1

Theoretical Codes of Identified Thematic Categories



Note: This original table, created by the authors, presents the relationship between intervening conditions, organizational actions, communication strategies, development communication approaches, and outcomes in advocacy contexts. Abbreviations used include FGD (Focus Group Discussion). The structure reflects a synthesized framework developed for illustrative and analytical purposes.

A theoretical model was then created after establishing linkages between the categories. The figure below is the theoretical model that illustrates the interplay of the categories and how alliance building is a communicative practice by anti-mining advocates.

Figure 2

Theoretical Model of Alliance Building as a Communicative Action



Note: The original theoretical model was created by the authors to illustrate the interplay of categories in alliance building as a communicative practice by anti-mining advocates. Abbreviations: IPs = Indigenous Peoples; FDGs = Focus Group Discussions.

The general proposition and discussion about the theoretical model

The model illustrates the intricate process of alliance building as practiced by ATM, following a chronological sequence from initial motivation to eventual outcomes. Depicted with semicircles and arrows, the figure represents the dynamic, continuous, and expanding nature of this process. This begins with the motivations of the advocates, who aim to expand their network by partnering with more environmental groups, people’s organizations, government entities, and others. This initial drive is crucial as it sets the foundation for the alliance. However, as they progress, the advocates encounter various challenges that impede their efforts. The need to overcome the intervening conditions in alliance building prompted the advocates to develop and implement

communication and organizational strategies. Their approaches not only addressed the immediate challenges but also contributed to positive outcomes which was critical for existing members to remain in the group. Furthermore, the positive outcomes then became motivators also for those who are not yet part of ATM to join the campaign. Thus, the process of alliance building becomes a self-perpetuating cycle, with each phase leading to further growth and expansion. The circle expands as the process continues.

Based on the theoretical model, the following are the informants' motivations for joining the alliance: (1) protecting the environment, (2) defending human rights, (3) supporting the indigenous people, (4) seeking help, and (5) ensuring a future for the next generation, wherein all these reasons for joining the alliance were motivated by public discontent. However, there were intervening conditions in forming the campaign group such as (1) people's apathy, (2) corporate intimidations, (3) government apathy, (4) different prioritizations, and (5) loss of members.

According to the informants, when people are not directly affected by mining, there is a high tendency to become less concerned about this issue. That is why public apathy somehow discouraged others from joining the anti-mining campaign. However, aside from red-tagging, informants also said that they experienced corporate intimidations from big mining companies who claim to provide job opportunities, investments, and revenue from which the country can benefit from. This is why informants face difficulties when asking for help from the local government. Despite being a non-government organization and drawing independence from the government, informants still acknowledged that the government was a key partner in pushing for reforms. Therefore, being ignored by the government was another challenge in alliance building for them.

Different priorities also made it difficult for the informants to establish a network with other organizations because it led to disagreement among its members. Informants also identified the loss of members as another intervening condition in the process of alliance building. Informants said that when they lose people either because of death or the resignation after receiving threats, other individuals and organizations feel discouraged from joining the alliance too. Subsequently, this somehow influenced how other people and

organizations perceived them as an alliance and began to regard them as a weak coalition.

These intervening conditions influenced the use of various organizational actions including information sharing, research, process documentation, rallying and staging protests, conducting meetings, and FGDs, including capacity building. Each of these strategies was employed by the informants to address each intervening condition in alliance building.

For people's apathy, informants believed that raising public awareness about the issue is important for people to picture the real situation of mining in the country. They resorted to information sharing, where they used accounts of personal experiences from various victims of mining incidents through community-based research and documentation.

To meet the challenge of corporate intimidation, informants said they "use the language of their enemy" by doing their own research and documentation. In this particular action, they verify if the claims of mining companies over jobs, investments, and revenues outweigh the impacts of mining on the environment and the people. According to Singh and Camba (2020) anti-mining movements in the Philippines not only critique the limitations of economic growth as envisioned by national elites, but also challenge the everyday political economy that normalizes inequality, poverty, and a narrow understanding of development focused on foreign investment and material wealth.

Informants were also triggered to adopt several creative actions, such as rallying and staging protests once the government did not recognize their efforts. Informants also reported that they use their research findings and documentation when they lobby with policymakers to address government apathy. And because the informants were aware that each organization's priorities were different (different prioritization), they used meetings and focused group discussions to negotiate and discuss topics jointly to find ways to collaborate. Informants also managed to conduct capacity-building activities including lectures and training sessions to encourage them to remain in the campaign.

The organizational actions were carried out using three key communication strategies: (1) use of media, (2) creative action, and (3) strategic dialogue. Furthermore, the strategic utilization of these various communication strategies was facilitated using the three approaches in development communication: (1) media for

development, (2) media development, and (3) participatory and community communication. According to Amoyan and Custodio (2019), development communication (DevCom) employs various approaches to development, evolving alongside changing development trends. From an integrated rural development standpoint, DevCom emphasizes placing people at the heart of social transformation through the power of their collective human capacity.

Research, process documentation, and information sharing were carried out through the use of media. Informants believed that mainstreaming mining would prompt people to act upon the issue. Publicizing the findings from the environmental accounts and research and the use of social media as a platform for disseminating information to the public allowed the informants to reach more audiences. The use of media as a communication strategy was guided by the first approach in development communication which is the media for development. According to Manyozo (2012), media for development encompasses centralized processes of reporting and communicating development, in which the mass media formulate the central strategy in public communication, campaigns, and advocacy on and about development issues. The objective, however, is to communicate development in ways that educate audiences and influence positive behavior changes (Rogers, 1993). According to Gormley and Guyer-Miller (2007), for an alliance to keep stakeholders, partner organizations, and others vested in the alliance successfully aware of progress, learning, and accomplishments, a concerted strategy for communication must be created and deployed. As a result, media for development produced an integrative learning approach that helped the informants earn sympathy from the general audience; thus, wider engagement from the public was achieved.

However, rallying and protesting were categorized under the communication strategy of “creative action.” Creative action as a communication strategy further builds a foundation on the development communication approach called “media development.” This involves supporting and building the capacity of media policies, structures, and ownership to strengthen good governance and fragile or transitional democracies (Manyozo, 2012). Pastor et al. (2010) defined alliances as sustained groupings that develop a frame based on shared values, maintain a link with a real and broad base in the community, and build for a long-term transformation in power systems. In this study, it was found that media development as an approach forced the government

to recognize the need to reflect on and analyze its policies. As a result, informants gained support from the government.

In contrast, organizational actions, including meetings, FGDs, and capacity building, were regarded as a communication strategy called “strategic dialogue” which was used by the informants to meet the challenge of different prioritization and loss of members. Strategic dialogue, however, is grounded on the participatory and community communication approach in development communication. This perspective draws support from the findings of Amoyan and Custodio (2019), who highlighted the importance of creating dialogic spaces within the process of development communication. Their study utilized this approach to facilitate discussions around the experiences of fisherfolk affected by mining in Marinduque, Philippines. They emphasized that communication practitioners and researchers must bridge the gap between the oppressed and the oppressors, suggesting that this dialogic space could be the crucial element necessary for development communication to drive social change. The dialogical communication intends to initiate a cyclical approach of looking, thinking (reflecting), and acting in ways that engage development stakeholders in collaborative planning and decision-making to influence the development and social change (Bacon et al., 2009). Niesten and Jolink (2015) argued that an alliance is more likely to succeed when partners can manage the information flow through open communication. It promotes a better and mutual understanding regarding rules and obligations and develops a shared model to work together. Spralls et al. (2011) added that regular sharing of information about day-to-day managerial operation promotes coordination and encourages the development of mutual commitment toward achieving common goals. In this study, the application of this strategy contributed to the improvement of ATM’s internal communication; thus, arriving at a more inclusive decision. From these outcomes, informants said they feel more motivated to stay in the organization and continue in the campaign.

This discussion, when viewed through the lens of the theory of communicative action, highlights the intricate interplay between communication processes and the formation of alliances aimed at social change. The theory posits that communication is not just a means of conveying information but is also inherently linked to the formation of societal norms, values, and collective actions.

The informants' motivations for joining the alliance, such as protecting the environment and defending human rights, reflect their communicative actions rooted in shared values and concerns. These motivations arise from a shared understanding of public discontent, indicating that communicative action plays a pivotal role in mobilizing individuals around common goals.

However, the process of alliance building is not without challenges, as evidenced by the intervening conditions such as apathy, corporate intimidation, and differing priorities. These challenges disrupt the communicative action by creating barriers to effective dialogue and coordination among alliance members. For instance, apathy among those not directly affected by mining undermines the communicative efforts to raise awareness and garner support for the cause.

Moreover, the use of strategic communication strategies, such as media engagement, creative actions like rallying and protesting, and strategic dialogue through meetings and capacity-building activities, demonstrates how communicative action is employed to navigate these challenges. These strategies serve as mediums through which information is shared, collective actions are organized, and dialogue is facilitated among alliance members to address differing priorities and overcome obstacles.

The success of ATM in building a strong network of alliances underscores the importance of effective communication in alliance building. By fostering open dialogue, facilitating information sharing, and engaging diverse stakeholders, ATM was able to establish itself as a prominent actor in the anti-mining campaign. In fact, in the article of Lansang (2011) which explored how development NGOs including ATM create advocacy coalitions to shape policy-making processes, they even concluded that coalitions played a significant role in empowering Local Government Units (LGUs) to assert their authority and resist mining operations within their territories.

While the model illustrates how complex the process of alliance building is, it further shows how this process becomes a communication practice. Communication is constitutive to alliance building and in the same way, alliance building operates through communication. Thus, alliance building is not alliance building without communication.

Implications and Recommendations

Being perceived as an organization having wide engagement from the public, sufficient government support, and adopting a democratic decision-making process, ATM was able to flourish and consequently build a strong network of alliance with civil society groups, government, the media, and the local people grounded in the community where ATM is doing its advocacy and development work.

Building upon a strong foundation on communication approaches, ATM led different groups with shared goals to coalesce. Thus, this points to the importance of communication in the overall work of alliance building.

The results of this study further revealed that ATM sought to bring together technical experts, community members, and policymakers by facilitating networks between other organizations, people's organizations, and the government. This suggests that an important initial step towards alliance building is the identification of potential allies. In this case, ATM's key partners in the anti-mining campaign were the community, non-government organizations, and the government itself. Consistent with Bhatti (2016), being recognized by the government and many NGOs helps an alliance link local stakeholders into policy and decision-making, hence improving the input of scientific information into the policy arena.

ATM as a non-government organization, was committed to responding to the urgency of stopping irresponsible mining in the Philippines. However, there is still a lack of concern from the public which makes alliance-building challenging. This means that less attention has been afforded to anti-mining advocates because most people are not aware of the present mining situation. As expressed by the informants, tensions resulted from incidents, such as red-tagging and killings. This situation highlights the need for the government to ensure the safety of NGO workers and other civil society groups, especially when they are placed in at-risk communities. Results also underscore the need for the government to re-examine its policies on mining as Matejova (2023) puts it, effective democracies depend on an understanding of the sources and mechanisms of public discontent.

Furthermore, the implications and recommendations highlight the continued importance of communication approaches in sustaining and expanding alliances. By recognizing the role of communication in identifying potential allies, fostering collaboration, and influencing

policy and decision-making processes, organizations like ATM can enhance their effectiveness in achieving their objectives.

Overall, the theory of communicative action provides a valuable framework for understanding how communication processes shape alliance-building efforts and contribute to collective action aimed at addressing societal challenges such as irresponsible mining. Through effective communication, alliances can mobilize resources, foster solidarity, and advocate for meaningful change in society.

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