

*Exploring the Notions of an Indigenous Presence in the Public Sphere of Mining
Discourse: The Alangan Mangyan's "Enclaved Public"*

Rikki Lee Mendiola

University of the Philippines Los Baños, Philippines

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Abstract

The study problematized the presence of “public sphere” in an indigenous people’s community using the Habermasian construction of the public sphere as lens. It assumes that constructs of public sphere is communicatively constituted in their articulations about their engagements with the mining issue. The study surfaced the Alangan Mangyan construction of the “public sphere” by examining the mining discourse in the community. The study specifically sought to answer the following questions: 1) Who is part of the public? 2) What are the discourses produced in the Mindoro mining issue? and 3) What are the ideologies and power relationships persisting in the discourses present and the public sphere?

Focus group discussion (FGD) served as the preliminary data gathering method to select the six participants for qualitative interview. Using Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis, the public demarcation in the community is determined as an “enclaved public,” with the figures of authority (both tribal and barangay) as the dominant voices and the face of the Alangan Mangyan in the mainstream discourse. Emerging discourses in the mining issue are the discourses of life (survival of nature, culture and future generation) and living (survival in economic terms). The “public sphere” manifests in the formal setting of the public meetings and in the lived experience of the participants – as collective thinking, decision making and shared awareness– and situates itself in the environmental discourse. Within this temporary notion of imperfect existence of “public sphere” by Habermasian standards, a presence of a play of power relationships reside – the tension of the tribal and barangay authority of the community in transition and “nahihiya” as a manifestation of unequal encounters within actors.

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Introduction

The distinctions between 'public' and 'private' are not natural but socially and culturally constructed; what counts as a public matter is always a question of political negotiation and struggle. (Koivisto and Valiverronen, 1997: 24)

I start this paper with the recognition of its two core concepts: public and struggle. These two concepts, as I go on to unfold the study piece by piece revealing our co-constructed reality, will find its way to building its relevance and ties with the practice of development communication (DevCom). This quote captures the essence of the forming and pursuing of my research 'problem,' if I may temporarily label it as one.

Background and rationale

Public can mean different depending on its usage – it may pertain to a thing or place that is shared, else state-owned. It is, to be simply put, common. In this paper, public is not used to pertain a certain ownership by the state or the majority of the people, but the metaphorical collective body that has the ability to think for itself, to judge, to pass decisions and scrutinize issues of the common.

Krippendorff (2008) sees the public as a human being and its personification as a result of our everyday utterance of how we see the public: “The public, the way we experience it, cannot literally speak, has no brain to think, no motor organs to act, and no purposes to pursue. Yet, *everyday use of language attributes virtually all of these human mental abilities to the public: thinking, making up its mind, judging, and enacting its beliefs. It is the metaphor of personalization that makes the public into the powerful, volatile, and irrational ruler that people fear and need to be concerned with. Personification grants the public an independent mind whose capricious and often unreasonable nature can be dangerous for those who mess with it*” [emphasis mine] (p. 130). The power is not merely in numbers, but the way we constructed the public in our everyday utterance. The power lies in the *personification* of public – having the functions of a human but being more “powerful” in terms of collectivity.

The concept of public (in line with the concept of the public sphere) is first understood by defining the line the concept of private ends – this therefore sets a notion of a static formation of what is public and private. Private is defined as the boundaries of household and firms – and to which within it circulates private interests. As Habermas (1991) earlier puts it, the public sphere started to transform when firms became powerful corporations that influence the public sphere through putting forward its own agenda.

The concept of public does not end at the construction of private – from a static stratification, the public is now seen as a dynamic, on-going process of inclusion and

exclusion. Public is not a static unit, but rather a continually emergent one and Shami (2009) defines it as “historically created through turbulent, provisional, and open ended processes of struggle, change and challenge” (p. 33). The lines of inclusion and exclusion is not, as the quote above says, natural, but a cultural and social construction.

The public, as Krippendorf (2008) emphasized, has the ability to act on its beliefs, determine which is of public importance and agenda. Making its way into the public arena, as mentioned in the quote, is a continuous political negotiation and struggle. The development agenda is experiencing the same while making its way to the public arena. This where the study anchors its importance: studying the public (and the public sphere), DevCom and its role in forwarding the development agenda.

Objectives

In general, the study aims to first, determine the presence or absence of the public sphere in the context of the Alangan Mangyan community, and next to describe the process and construction of the an Alangan Mangyan public sphere, if there is one. The study aims to reach the following specific objectives:

1. Determine the demarcation that classifies who is part of the public through the identification of the subject positions (or social roles) of the participants in the discourse of the Mindoro mining issue;
2. Enumerate discourses produced in the public sphere on the Mindoro mining issue by distinguishing discourse types and prevailing discussion and its respective classification on the issue of mining; and
3. Determine ideologies and power relationships persisting in the public sphere by laying out the order of discourses identified, and the identification of relations that may reflect any social and class struggle within the public sphere and its role and implications in the perpetuation of the discourses.

Significance of the study

The study is born out of the interest on coming up with a public sphere construction fitting on the context of the Philippines as a developing country and founded on the principles and ideals of development communication (DevCom). At the era of the participatory paradigm on development, there are few studies conducted on the concept of public and its implication in the field of DevCom.

Quebral (2012) defines DevCom as the “science of human communication linked to the transitioning of communities from poverty in all its forms to a dynamic, overall

growth that fosters equity and the unfolding of individual potential” (p. 2). Selecting a community in transition, specifically an indigenous people’s (IP) community, this study tries to explore poverty in different forms in this specific site – and how communication is shaping and being shaped in the issues inside the community. This study places itself in the critical tradition – seeing roles of communication and power in the development agenda and, in extension, the implications on the concept of public.

Review of Related Literature

My research revolves around problematizing the concept of the public sphere in an IP community having Jurgen Habermas' concept of the public sphere as a lens – specifically looking at the Mindoro mining project as the issue that calls as a public matter. Habermas (1989) defines public sphere, in his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, as “conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor” (p 27). Habermas' definition of the public sphere is mainly based in the context of the bourgeois class – which in turn, gathered a number of critics on its concept and context.

The Habermasian Public Sphere: From Genesis to Transformation

In Habermas' (1989) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, he first discusses the genesis of the bourgeois public sphere from a historical review of the concept of public (its etymology, its social implications, and parts of civilization that recognized the existence of public). Habermas then goes on to layout the basic blueprint of the public sphere: its social structures, political functions, idea and ideology. He then shifts gear to the changes in the concept of the public sphere: from social structures to political function, to its relation to the concept of public opinion.

Habermas (1989) starts off to define public sphere as *Öffentlichkeit*. This German term implies a variety of meaning – a spatial concept (the social sites or arenas) where meanings are articulated, distributed and negotiated. The word public in public sphere implies there is a collective body behind this process.

The conception of the public sphere clearly marks a separation between private and public – the affairs of the households and work (where private interests are of priority), and the state (which is assumed to be a structure of power and exerts domination) come together and mediated in the public sphere. The private interests and opinion must be set aside and overcome to emerge common interests and concerns, and reach 'societal consensus' (Kellner, 2000). The public sphere is dedicated for the debate and discussion of issues of general concern and public good.

It is assumed that in the public sphere, there is freedom speech and assembly, a free press, and the right to freely participate in political debate and decision-making.

Dahlberg (2012) discusses that there are public sphere six conditions: thematization and reasoned critique of problematic validity claims, reflexivity, ideal role taking, sincerity, formal and discursive equality and autonomy from state and corporate power. These conditions are from Dahlberg's (2012) reading of Habermas' idealizations of the public sphere: therefore resulting to a set of normative conditions or critical standards of the public sphere. Each condition presupposes the condition before it: (1) thematization and reasoned critique of problematic validity claims; (2) reflexivity; (3) ideal role taking; (4) sincerity; (5) formal and discursive equality; (6) autonomy from state and corporate power.

The public sphere, then, should be a venue for a rational debate on the concerns of the public and the one that can direct its force and influence to the state and corporations, not the other way around. It is also a venue of freedom of speech – every actor is with an equal chance on expression and debate. Habermas' conditions, however, is met with criticism. One of these criticisms is the public sphere's extent on being plausible on the practical level and being just an ideal. The concept is also contested on the abstract nature of Habermas' concept of it: there is only one existing public sphere, overlooking the opposing nature of public discourses and its problematic demarcation between public and private (Koivisto and Valiveronen, 1996).

The Alangan Mangyan Community

Mindoro Island, the seventh biggest island in the Philippine Archipelago, is part of Region 4B (MIMAROPA) – located at coordinates 13°24'45"N 121°7'43"E. It is one of the five bio-geographical zones in the country. Mindoro Occidental and Mindoro Oriental, the provinces of the island, are separated by a natural boundary, the Halcon-Baco mountain range. The Department of Agriculture ranked the Mindoro provinces second and third largest food-producing in the country – recognized as the food basket for the nearby mainland and Manila (Goodland and Wicks, 2008).

Mindoro is home to eight Mangyan ethnic groups namely Sibuyan, Hanunuo, Alangan, Buhid, Tau Buid, Tadyawan, Ratagnon, Bangon, Iraya – called generically as the Mangyan Indigenous People. They have lived in the island for centuries, granting them the legitimate Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC) of 1995.

The Alangan Mangyan tribes occupy the mountain ranges in parts of Baco, Victoria, Naujan, and San Teodoro in Oriental Mindoro and in Mamburao, Sta. Cruz, and Sablayan in Occidental Mindoro. The research site of the selected Alangan Mangyan community is based in the town of Baco, Oriental Mindoro. Barangay Lantuyang, one of the 27 barangays in the town and located at the foot of Mt. Halcon, is home to the Alangan Mangyan tribe.

The community is in transition – urbanization is slowly reaching their community as evident from their practice and language use. The tribe retained a few of their practices – such as swidden farming and betel nut chewing – but no one wears the traditional clothes and the “*balay lakoy*” (big communal house) is now divided to smaller houses with one family only, or at most three families. Most of them speak Tagalog (regional language). From a tribal form of government, they split the governing responsibility into two: the Sangguniang Barangay and the tribal elder circle. Roman Catholic, Protestants, Iglesia ni Kristo, Evangelical, Baptist, Adventist, Jehova's Witness and Born Again are few of the religious sects in the area. The tribe is one of the target sites by the nickel mining corporation – conducting consultations with the tribesmen in the area.

Methodology

Assumptions

I embraced an interpretivist paradigm – recognizing human subjectivity, and trying to see the world through the participants' eyes. Every human action serves and attempts to accomplish a purpose, based on the meanings and context one is embedded. In having conversations with my participants is an assumption that the said interaction is framed as an interview – a depth interview, in particular, as means to further understand the participants' point of view (Baxter and Babbie, 2004). This interview with the participants is semi-structured – I, as a researcher, steers the topic of conversation according to the phenomenon under scrutiny (preparing questions beforehand), but at the same time provides a space to explore individual emerging views (asking follow-up questions and exploring deeper in the participants' answers). I borrowed an assumption from postmodern interviewing – interviewing is not just a data gathering technique or tool, but a *social production between the interviewer and the respondent* – a collaborative construction between two active parties (Fontana, 2003 in Gubrium and Holstein, 2003). Communication is seen as constitutive model, not a linear one – thus it is discursive.

With these assumptions on the interactions with the research participants, I recognize a privilege I placed upon myself as a researcher – exerting some control on the flow of the conversations, asking questions only about the topic on hand. This may have limited the participants' expression of themselves through these talks. Even with the acknowledgment of a co-collaborative space, I, as a researcher, manufactured the encounter on which a conversation about mining took place.

This study places itself, as mentioned before, in the critical paradigm of the communication theory terrain. Communication in the critical tradition explains how talk came to perpetuate social injustices by embedding ideological distortions and how communicative practices can expose these certain injustices and emancipate

people (Craig, 1999). Consciousness raising can only be only achieved through communication's enabling critical reflection – thereby enabling political action towards liberating the oppressed people.

Data collection

These questions I answered through qualitative interview with 6 community members in Barangay Lantuyang, all of them Alangan Mangyan in ethnicity. They were selected through the first field work where a focus group discussion was held. From 16 participants, 6 were selected on the assumption that they are the sources in which I could achieve data saturation. These conversations are assumed to be co-created – the talks produced within it are both our constructions, therefore a shared experience. These interviews were then hardcoded into transcripts and served as text.

Data Analysis

The first order analysis of the text will commence the description stage (Fairclough, 1995) surfacing formal properties, categories of the text. In this study, the conversations transcribed into interview transcripts will serve as the text under analysis. Interview transcripts underwent cycles of coding, starting from initial coding then proceeding to axial coding. The coding done is not linear but an iterative one – after initial coding, reviewing and validating codes, narrowed down blobs of codes. This is the first dimension of the analytical framework (see Figure 1) – analysis and examination of the text.

The second order analysis will proceed to interpretation and explanation stages – contextualizing the text in terms of its relation to a bigger picture. Analysis, turning to the stages of interpretation and explanation, is not something that can be applied to an “object,” else set conditions about the “object” – what one analyzes is much less determinate. Interpretation deals with cognitive processes of participants. Explanation, on the other hand, deals with relationships between transitory and social events (interactions) and more enduring social structures which shape and are shaped by these events.

In both cases of explanation and interpretation, I, as the analyst, am in the position of offering a broad sense of interpretations of complex and invisible relationships – taking it up a notch from the description stage. This stage is where all critical reflection will unfold. Fairclough's stages are also in parallel with Alvesson and Skoldberg's proposition on levels of interpretation.

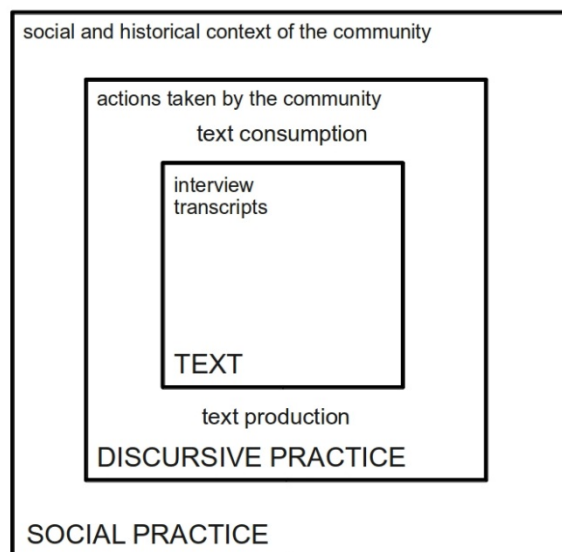


Figure 1. Analytical framework of the study as patterned to Fairclough's three dimensional model for critical discourse

Results and Discussion

In answering the first research subquestion on who is part of the public, first the actors involved in the Mindoro mining discourse had been identified – determining that the actors are not separated by the dichotomy of public and private but the public as an emerging unit. Their roles are determined through the mentions of the participants of who were present in the mining consultations, who influenced any knowledge claims. Though four actors emerged, media, mining corporation, State and the Alangan Mangyan community, only mining corporation and the Alangan Mangyan community shared the limelight, with the involvement of direct media and State were not further examined.

The discussion on the first research subquestion proceeds to the demarcation between who is part of the public and who is not. As the public sphere now is not defined by an actual physical space, but a temporal one, voices served as the representativeness of inclusion. With the aid of discourse analysis, voices, dominant, silenced and unused, become the valued presence in the public arena.

While the public discourse on the Mindoro mining project goes on, the Alangan Mangyan community is placed in the collective actor as the indigenous peoples (IP). The IP's are directly affected as their land is the targeted site for mining operations. Within the IP sector, the tribal elder council prevails as a dominant voice in the public – and is given utmost importance on their insights and opinion. The barangay council is also part of the prevailing dominant voice in the public – being a symbol of authority for mobilizing members of the community. Participants, however thinking

that their voices are heard in the public arena, are characterized on the membership of public in their presence. Having their own voices, they let persons of authority, tribal and barangay, speak for them, trusting they will forward the public interest in the discussion. These two dominant voices represent the Alangan Mangyan community, and part of the Mangyan tribe as a whole, in the mainstream discourse – carrying a salient identity for the whole tribe. The identities of participants, however, are hidden in a wider public arena – then classifying the Alangan Mangyan public as an “enclaved public” (Squires, 2002).

Table 1. Characteristics of an “enclaved public” (Squires, 2002)

Spaces and Discourses	Resources	Goals	Performance in wider publics	Sanctions
Hidden, used/produced solely by group members	Few material, political, legal, or media resources	Preserve culture, foster resistance; create strategies for the future	“public transcript”	Violence and disrespect from state and dominant publics

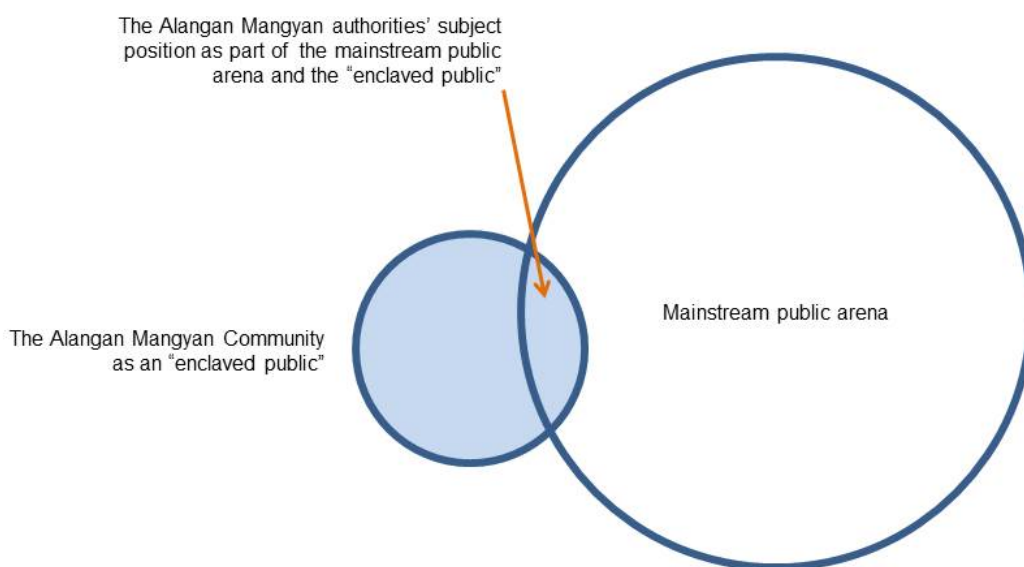


Figure 2. Illustration of “public” in the Alangan Mangyan community alongside the mainstream public arena

For the second research subquestion, there is an attempt to surface the discourses that are shaped and shape the Alangan Mangyan community in the Mindoro mining issue. Through these discourses they build on the arguments that shape the public opinion on mining. An overarching discourse has been identified: a discourse of survival. Survival is split into two: living and life. The two are the foundations of their

individual opinion, their knowledge on the issue, and the insights they share into the public arena.

Participants subscribe on the “discourse of life” – entailing the preservation of nature, the sustenance of culture and the concern for the future. The Alangan Mangyan culture owes its affinity to nature – not only because of its cultural beliefs that supernatural beings guard nature, but also the consequence of “angering” the forces of nature. Mining, in their view, will bring about death of their community members due to its drastic intervention to the natural state of nature. Nature, as they see it, is like a human being that can feel pain, express anger and carry out retribution to those who abuse. These foundation of their beliefs is rooted in their experience of nature – how they see that as a consequence of taking something from nature (the mountaineers' stories), heavy rains will be brought about in the community.

Influence from an outside source is not negligible – though both on the same side, mining awareness campaigns brought about the outside sources offer a different explanation. These outside sources, such as media, and government ministries, are mentioned as sources of their knowledge in the matter of mining. These outside sources present mining that brings about consequence of land degradation and infertile land.

The concern for the future is evident – they see mining as a “Band-Aid” solution, bringing about temporary needs but at the same time destroying the land they, and the future generation, needs in the long run.

There is, however, the presence of the “discourse of living” - which comprise of the economic based arguments. This is the main argument of the mining representatives, as conveyed by the participants. Mining offers the ways in which to attain the basic needs of a person – a job and money in exchange for the land property to sustain everyday needs like food and a scholarship for the children's free education. As the other Mangyan miners converse with the participants about the current situation, what surfaced is the economic need is greater than preserving the nature they have. Participants who had conversations with them suppose that the mining activity could have stopped because of its consequences.

Within the discourse of mining, I identified three main concepts that emerged as the making of the sphere – collective thinking and decision making, and shared awareness. These three concepts were from the participants' identification of the process and product of public consultation. The three concepts, thinking, decision making, and awareness, personifies the public involved in the discussion of public interest and concern.



Figure 3. Representation of the three metaphors that makes a public functioning like human being

There is a tension in choosing between living and life – a struggle to choose between what is needed now and what is needed tomorrow. While all participants agree that they have a collective decision not to allow any mining activity in the area, one sentiment from a participant that there is still a discrepancy in the emerging public opinion. There are still people who disagree that mining should be prohibited.

Ideologies and power relationships that are analyzed in this study is part of the critical reflection (as the third subquestion) – questioning why the former discourses emerged have something to do with existing ideologies and power relationships within the public sphere, and still persist in the community.

A slow transition from traditional ways to the ways of the lowlands crept into the community. The concept of “progress” found its way to their gates, and therefore setting a standard that never existed before. A dichotomy of “*maganda*” (good) and “*mahirap*” (poor) “*na buhay*” (life) (the noun described) surfaced recurrently in every interview with the participants. An ideology of “belonging” was born, therefore gave birth to the thinking of the Tagalog (lowlanders) utopia – the ideal lifestyle.

Power in discourse is all about the power relations inside the actual discourse – a critical reflection on the encounter level of discourse (e.g. conversations). Throughout the conversation, there is a reliance on authority on being heard – “*nahihya*” (shyness as roughly translated in English) as a road block to expressing oneself in the discussions on the said issue. The public meetings and consultation did not cater an environment that reflects a group ready to listen to everyone’s insight about the issue. Reliance on the authority is not only due to “*hiya*” but also because of the value given to the words of the persons of authority. They are supposed to know the right thing to say and evaluate what is best for the majority. Silence is attributed to trust placed upon the authorities to voice out the concerns that is best for everyone in the community

Conclusion and Recommendations

In examining the Mindoro mining issue, I have co-constructed with my participants a conceptual framework of the public sphere, which emerged from the analysis of the text. Specifically this framework discusses only the public sphere at work in the Mindoro mining discourse.

With my temporary engagement with the community, I only draw a temporary conclusion on this study. My field work for ten days (for two visits) I deem as inadequate – if I had the chance to immerse as long as I wanted (without the constraints of time and money), I may have explored more insights, listened to more voices, and more sensitive to discovering the silenced voices in the community.

The emergent discourses, the discourse of living and life, reside on the environmental discourse – locating the presence of the “public sphere” in the environment (the discussions residing on the biophysical aspect of the environment). In the Habermasian conditions of a public sphere, the Alangan Mangyan construction of the public sphere is an imperfect one – residing on the irony of empowerment and silenced voices (formal and discursive equality and the autonomy from state and corporate power), on self-questioning and placing the self in the shoes of others (reflexivity and ideal role taking). This construction, though deemed imperfect by the Habermasian standards, emerged from the text as the “public sphere,” if I may call it, in the Mindoro mining issue.

A conceptual framework of the Alangan Mangyan “public sphere” can be viewed below (Figure 4). This framework is like a puzzle piece – each puzzle piece arranged in the previous chapter (viewed first as an individual piece, then situated and placed at its context or right place in the puzzle) and, temporarily finishing an image (the puzzle is not completed, only a part of it showed a discernible image), the whole picture waiting to be unveiled.

The visual elements within the framework have its own meaning – in general, the solid circles in different colors represent the actors in the public sphere (enclosed by a larger circle, the mainstream public arena). The basic figure of Alangan Mangyan public representation in Figure 2 is joined with the rest of the actors. Arrows signify movement towards the sphere or outside the sphere – arrows of different hues represent different intensities. The light blue circle (enclosed by a red outlined box) represents the Alangan Mangyan “enclaved public” and within it, the making of the sphere in Figure 3 as the Alangan Mangyan construction of “public sphere”.

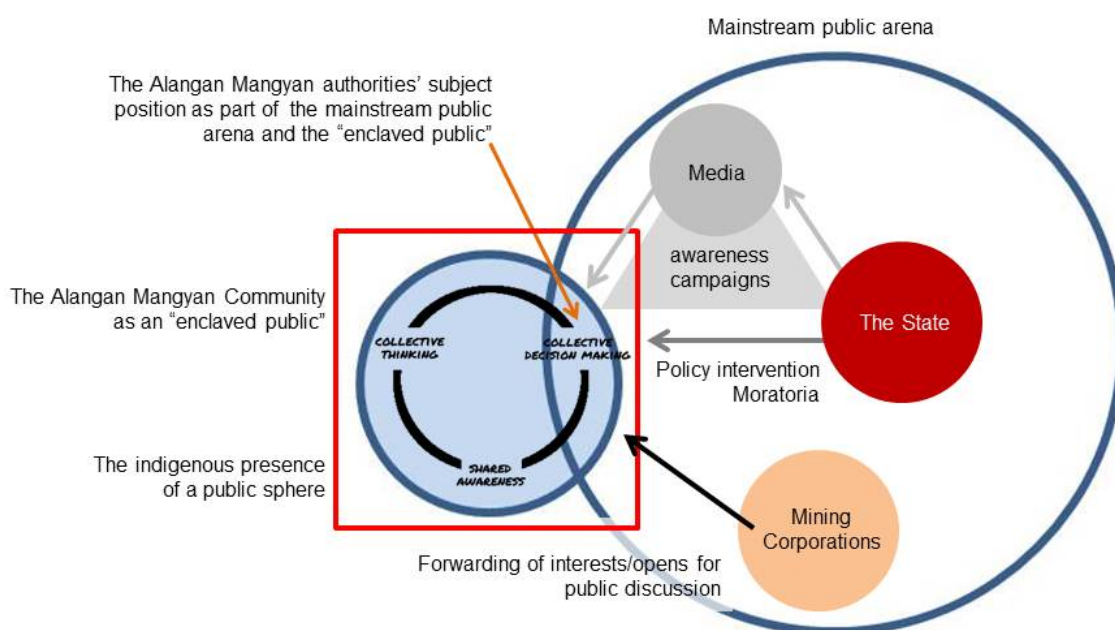


Figure 4. Conceptual framework of the Alangan Mangyan public sphere

This research did not subscribe to the existing dichotomy of public and private, private sphere or public sphere – instead, the actors are separated in terms of roles taken in the mining consultation process. The Alangan Mangyan community, as the directly affected population in the mining operations, become the participants in public consultations, thus a movement towards the middle to mediate between interests of the community and the mining corporations are made in the venues of public consultation. Being the participants of public deliberation process, the Alangan Mangyan community is not independent of any prior influence. The State has its own interference, through awareness campaigns and media materials. The State also has a different effect in the sphere – as they decide on any policy making regarding the matters of public concern, thus have the power to strengthen interests through political policies. The mining corporations, then to invoke their interests, open their interests for public scrutiny, thus a movement towards the sphere is also made. Through debates and discussions, collective thinking, decision making and a “shared awareness” are being constantly shaped and reshaped as the discourse on mining continues. This then, in turn, recursively influences the State's policies, and the collective decision and public opinion is (re)shaped.

The “public sphere,” then, is characterized by being a venue to discussion as to reach a consensus on the public concern and produce a collective decision and public opinion – and being continuously (re)shaped by collective thinking, decision making and shared awareness. These three are both elements and products of the “public sphere” – through discussion, a collective body thinks and decides, and a shared

awareness is developed through understanding (the telos of human communication, as Habermas calls it).

Talk and discursive practice consists of how they view talk and how they use it as a participation in the public arena. First they view talk as a way of community organizing and mobilizing – seeing how the spoken work gather representative of the barangay population. Second, they see talk as a way to understanding – with continuous talk and discussion, they will come into consensus, a fruit of meeting in the middle and agreeing to it. These views of communication facilitate the (re)shaping of collective thinking and decision making, and shared awareness that makes up the public sphere.

The participants stated that the products of the public sphere are agreement, (the next step after agreement) approval, heard voices and oneness. However they may seem positive, insights from different participants that even with those four products, there is no action even with the agreement in place. This called into question if the public sphere fulfils its normative value.

This framework, however, cannot be generalized as the state of the “public sphere” in every issue the Alangan Mangyan community faces. Participation or representativeness may vary as relevance of the issue varies. The public sphere might have championed the Mindoro mining issue in the area – fulfilling its normative value, but its presence might fluctuate, as this research did not extend to examining the public sphere involving the all the issues and affairs of the community.

This framework and concluded presence of the “public sphere” is not based on the Habermasian ideals of the public sphere. However the conditions are not all present, a construction of the “public sphere,” if I may call it, emerged from the conversations. The presence is, as the Habermasian ideal may evaluate it, imperfect – but the presence can only go as far as its context in the practice, not in the ideal one. Looking through the ideals of Habermas’ construction of the public sphere is a criticism of its probable existence in “reality,” if I may use the term for a practical existence.

The Alangan Mangyan public sphere construction is only jumbled puzzle pieces of mental representations of the participants, arranged and joined by the researcher (which is to say I, a researcher influenced by her own representations) to form a coherent picture – a 2-dimensional framework of the public sphere as it emerged from the mining issue. This, however, is only one of the many representations waiting to be explored in research. The whole picture is not yet complete, and I invite you to pick up the puzzle pieces and join the discourse on the public sphere – founded on the DevCom theory and praxis.

Implications on Development Communication and Development Agenda

One of the important implications on the public sphere is the upholding of its normative value. Having a working public sphere can drive political agendas, community movements, and discussions on issues of public concern. This is one of the phenomena DevCom could explore – and in the future, may see the potential of the public sphere in service of the field. Up until now, there is a continuing struggle to forward the development agenda and redefining development in the country's own context.

I place the final piece of the puzzle of this study, an important learning that emerged as the journey of the study commenced – a self as part of a whole, a self part of the public with the power to make that change.

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