

Mobilizing for energy transition: Tactics from localized anti-coal movement in central Philippines

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November 22, 2022

Abstract

Developing countries need sufficient, reliable, and affordable energy for economic development; yet, the source of this energy remains contested. In the Philippines, coal-based electricity supplies most of the country's energy requirement; hence contravening the country's energy transition agenda. Until the moratorium on new coal-fired power plant development in October 2020, the Philippine government aggressively pursued the development of the coal sector, labelling coal projects as nationally significant. With this policy direction, many local governments, including provinces and cities, had rallied around coal. Dissent against coal, nonetheless, was also prominent, with civil society often leading these mobilizations, and using the narrative of energy transition in their appeals. This poster describes one of these movements, focusing on civil society-business-and-ecclesial-led dissent on coal-based energy system for the province of Bohol in central Philippines. Using primary data from interviews and site observation, supplemented by social media and secondary data analysis, this poster describes the tactics of a localized, yet networked, anti-coal mobilisation while pursuing an energy transition agenda. Led by a trifecta of actors, including private citizens, businesspeople, and the clergy, the movement employed nonviolent approaches through network-building, letter-writing, and social media-campaigning. As a result, the provincial government of Bohol issued an ordinance banning future coal-based development in the province and resituating the energy transition agenda in local development.

Mobilizing for energy transition

Tactics from a localized anti-coal movement in central Philippines

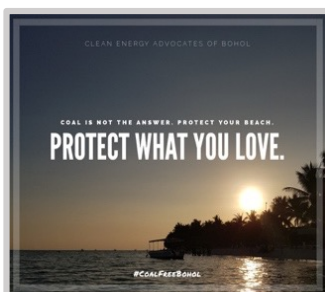
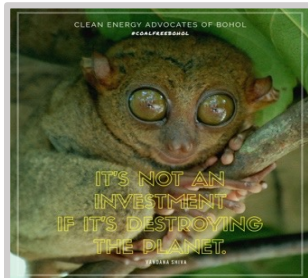
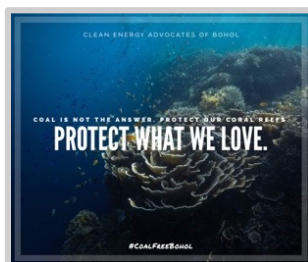
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RESEARCH QUESTION

what are the modes, strategies, and tactics that coal opposition had used in advancing coal dissent in the Philippines

METHODS

- Primary data collection through an ex-post case study of an anti-coal mobilization event in Bohol
- Principal research method: key informant face-to-face interviews
- Triangulation through a review of documents gathered during site visits, relevant websites, social media accounts of the actors, groups, and institutions mentioned, and news accounts.



Mechanisms

Short description

Clear and coherent visioning

Creating a clear, coherent and overarching vision for the campaign so that a collective identity is built that could transform people into actively engaging with social action

Culturing and Framing

Culturing is about developing an idea or message with active consideration of the local context and norms of the intended audience to mediate meaning. Framing delineates what is relevant and what is not, focuses people's attention to an issue, and helps tie elements so that a context-specific storyline rather than another is told.

Relating and triggering communal peer pressure

Spreading a shared understanding of demands to catalyse a sense of obligation amongst social groups

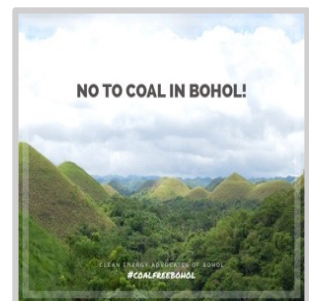
Messaging and boosting publicity

Creating trustworthy platforms in all forms of media, including social media

Webbing and diversifying networks

Interconnecting heterogeneous actors and their plural campaigns into an informal arrangement, without a hierarchy and a central authority

We are presently supplied by coal but our push is for Bohol to eventually adopt 100% renewable energy based on whatever is feasible. It is wrong to think that coal is the only viable option. Globally, coal is no longer practicable, so why are we getting backward? We also do not want to give people the impression that we are only opposing without providing alternatives. We understand your position if there is no option, but there are better options.



HIGHLIGHTS

- Civil society, businesses and church leaders in Bohol province in central Philippines mobilized against coal-based electricity development.
- This coal dissent used mobilization mechanisms that enabled a local, place-based, networked, and influential movement that led to a provincial coal-ban.
- The Bohol case shows the enduring quality and utility of coherent visioning, framing, publicity, communal peer pressure, and diversifying networks in social mobilizations.
- This coal dissent exemplifies local capacity to contribute in the transnational efforts to mobilize for climate action.