

Environmental Conflict Communication PBNU and Activist Perspectives on Mining in Raja Ampat: A Discourse Analysis of the ROSI Kompas TV Broadcast

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Abstract

Environmental communication, critical discourse analysis, religious institutions, ecological justice, media framing, epThis study explores the dynamics of environmental conflict communication between religious institutions and civil society activists through a critical discourse analysis of the televised debate on ROSI Kompas TV, focusing on nickel mining in Raja Ampat. Using Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which comprises three levels—text, discursive practice, and social practice—this research investigates how Ulil Abshar Abdalla (representing PBNU) and activist Iqbal Damanik construct opposing narratives regarding the involvement of religious organizations in mining projects. PBNU frames the mining initiative as a form of “public benefit” and national development, while the activist emphasizes ecological justice and the protection of indigenous rights. The analysis reveals how language, diction, metaphors, and interruption strategies are employed to establish both legitimacy and resistance. Additionally, the role of media is shown to be central in framing and selecting narratives, often marginalizing the voices of directly affected indigenous communities. This study contributes to the growing field of environmental communication in Indonesia by demonstrating how ecological conflicts are constructed and contested within mainstream public discourse.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis; Ecological Justice; Environmental Communication; Media Framing; Religious Institutions

INTRODUCTION

Raja Ampat is a tropical marine area known as a center of global biodiversity and has recently become a target for the nickel mining industry. In recent years, the nickel mining project by PT Gag Nikel has sparked both support and opposition, particularly because this area is classified as a small island protected by Law No. 1 of 2014. Sani (2020) explains that open-pit mining on small islands like Gag is ecologically and ethically unjustifiable, as it negatively impacts marine ecosystems and the social structure of indigenous communities. Meanwhile, the Indonesian government promotes the granting of Special Mining Business License Areas (WIUPK) to religious organizations, including Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), as part of the redistribution of national resources. This policy has triggered public debate, as represented in the ROSI Kompas TV program, where PBNU and environmental activists expressed opposing views. This broadcast opened up a space for conflict communication

that is important to examine through critical discourse analysis (Kompas.id, 2024; The Jakarta Post, 2025).

The communication conflict in the program reflects a narrative struggle between two actors representing different social forces—religious moral authority and environmental activism. PBNU frames mining as a form of “public good” using religious diction and economic rhetoric, while activists emphasize the importance of ecological sustainability and the rights of indigenous peoples. Masitoh Rohma (2024), in her study on digital activism, shows that public responses to NU’s involvement in mining issues are strongly influenced by narratives developed in the media. However, Rohma’s research does not discuss how these narratives are constructed in live televised debates. This is where this study becomes relevant, as it explores the dynamics of conflict communication directly within mainstream media (Rizqiani, 2023). This approach provides deeper insight into how language and symbols are used to shape public opinion (Harnowo & Habib, 2023; Mongabay, 2024). Existing environmental communication studies generally focus more on the social-ecological impacts of mining, as demonstrated in Ulat et al.’s (2024) study on coral reef damage, declining water quality, and social conflict resulting from PT Gag Nikel’s mining operations. However, few studies have analyzed the representation of such conflicts in terms of inter-actor communication in mass media (Ramadhania, 2024). Kurniawan et al. (2020) discussed public perceptions of environmental programs in nickel mining but did not dissect communication practices or discursive strategies of elites. In the ROSI program, the narrative between PBNU and activists is shaped not only through verbal content but also through visual framing, intonation, interruptions, and complex emotional expressions. This kind of communication becomes a form of ideological representation that deserves to be studied through a critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework (Iskandar & Sofuoğlu, 2025).

Critical discourse analysis allows researchers to examine how language, symbols, and social practices function in producing and maintaining power structures (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998). In the context of televised debates like ROSI, communication between speakers becomes a stage for reproducing ideologies and legitimizing them. PBNU, as a representation of religious authority, constructs arguments based on social benefits and developmental preaching, while activists present critiques of ecological injustice and the dominance of resource capitalization. Research by Nurdin and Gunawan (2023) shows that media framing of environmental conflicts plays a significant role in shaping divided public opinion. However, their study does not address the dynamics of direct communication

between actors in a televised context. This study seeks to fill that gap by analyzing discourse practices in television debate formats as representations of contemporary environmental conflicts (Mongabay, 2025; Mosaic Indonesia, 2024).

In the ROSI broadcast, the use of metaphors, religious diction, and interruption strategies are key elements in forming ideological positions. The communication that occurs is not only argumentative but also performative in which each actor attempts to create an impression of dominance or credibility before the public (Hidayat, 2025). This framing reveals that environmental discourse is not neutral but is laden with specific values and agendas. According to Dryzek (2013), environmental communication always reflects a discursive struggle between development narratives and sustainability. Thus, this study does not only analyze message content but also examines how the message is packaged, contested, and positioned within the public communication arena. From the perspective of social practice, the involvement of religious organizations in managing nickel mining reflects the relationship between state power, capital, and moral representation in the public sphere. Hendrasani (2022) states that mining projects on small islands are generally driven by political compromises and national economic agendas that overlook ecological caution. The media plays a central role in either amplifying or obscuring these conflict dimensions through the selection of speakers, speaking duration, and presentation style. In the ROSI broadcast, it is evident that the media is not merely a channel of information but also an actor that directs the discourse dynamics. This study aims to uncover the meaning-making process within the context of environmental discourse contestation. Thus, the approach used combines textual dimensions, discourse practices, and broader socio-economic-political contexts (Aliyah & Putra, 2023).

This study has strategic value in understanding how environmental conflicts are constructed within Indonesia's public communication space. Unlike previous research that focuses on perception, impact, or digital activism, this study presents a reading of direct communication practices in television media. With a focus on the ROSI broadcast, this research responds to the need for communication studies that more reflectively address the dynamics of real and ongoing conflicts. The novelty of this study lies in the integration between critical discourse analysis and the context of contemporary environmental conflicts involving strategic actors such as PBNU and activists. This research also contributes to media studies by showing how broadcast spaces can become arenas for the struggle of representation and ideological narratives (Fricker, 2007). Based on the background and

research gaps explained, this article aims to analyze forms of environmental conflict communication in the ROSI Kompas TV program. The main focus is directed at three levels: text analysis (framing, diction, metaphors, and speaker interruptions), discourse practice analysis (legitimation strategies, ideological positions, and public emotions), and social practice analysis (political-economic context of mining, indigenous community conflicts, and the role of religious elites and media). Using a critical discourse analysis approach, this research traces how environmental communication is formed and contested in Indonesia's mainstream media. The aim is to reveal the roles of media and actors in shaping environmental narratives and their consequences for public awareness and policy. This study is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of environmental communication and media democracy in Indonesia.

METHOD

Within a paradigmatic framework, this study operates under a critical paradigm that views social reality as historical, ideological, and shaped by unequal power relations. The critical paradigm positions language as the primary medium in reproducing and resisting dominant structures. Therefore, this study aims not only to understand texts but also to uncover the hidden power structures behind discourse production (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011). This paradigm is appropriate for examining environmental conflict communication, especially when the discourse involves religious institutions and civil activism that symbolically confront each other in the media. The critical paradigm also rejects the notion that knowledge is neutral; instead, it seeks to expose the ideological interests embedded in texts and social practices (Habermas, 1984). Therefore, the researcher assumes the position of an ideologically aware reader who actively interprets media texts to uncover hidden interests, symbolic domination, and resistance that emerge through communication practices. In this way, the study is not only descriptive but also emancipatory—aiming to liberate public understanding from hegemonic discourse through critical reading.

The approach used in this study refers to the critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework as formulated by Norman Fairclough (1995), which integrates three main dimensions: text, discourse practice, and social practice. CDA is used because it can connect linguistic structures with broader social structures and explain how language functions in producing and maintaining power dominance (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Using a critical paradigm, the researcher interprets the communication conflict in the ROSI broadcast not

only as verbal representation but also as an ideological articulation of conflicting interests among the state, religion, and civil society in mining issues.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Text Analysis: Framing, Diction, and Rhetorical Patterns

In the ROSI Kompas TV program, the framing of statements by Ulil Abshar Abdalla, representing PBNU, reflects an attempt to frame the nickel mining issue not merely as a matter of support or opposition, but as an internal organizational deliberation. He consistently stated that “NU has not made any decision yet,” and that “all processes must be discussed through official forums.” Ulil’s diction—such as “deliberation,” “organizational structure,” and “no final decision”—represents PBNU’s formal and cautious position. These word choices demonstrate a discourse of caution and an effort to distance PBNU from accusations of direct involvement in the mining project. Ulil’s rhetorical pattern also tends to avoid direct confrontation, using a systematic explanatory approach and correcting public opinion.

In contrast, Iqbal Damanik, an environmental activist, used framing that emphasized the urgency of the crisis and ecological justice. He stated that the involvement of mass organizations in mining businesses is a form of “structural crime,” noting that “agrarian conflicts and environmental damage have already occurred in many places.” Iqbal’s diction—such as “destruction of living spaces,” “indigenous community victims,” and “concession politics”—constructs a discourse of resistance against the exploitation of natural resources legitimized by the state. This framing places NU, as a religious institution, in a morally questionable position if it participates in environmentally damaging systems.

Iqbal’s rhetorical pattern relies on field data and victim narratives, combined with moral pressure on religious institutions. He cited cases in Morowali and Halmahera as part of a systemic pattern of destruction that cannot be ignored. His rhetoric is confrontational but evidence-based. This contrasts with Ulil’s more defensive communication style, emphasizing internal processes. This interaction creates a debate dynamic between institutional moral narratives and civil resistance narratives, discursively reflecting tensions in environmental conflict communication in public television spaces.

Program moderator Rosianna Silalahi acted as a mediator and discussion facilitator, directing more questions toward clarifying NU’s position. She did not take a confrontational stance against either speaker but gave Iqbal space to express criticism openly. The interview structure, which alternated speaking turns, offered relatively balanced airtime to both

speakers but discursively highlighted institutional narrative dominance, as Ulil appeared longer, calmer, and more systematic. Thus, the text of the program reflects a struggle of meaning between morally framed development and resistance to ecological legitimacy perceived as violated by the state and religious institutions.

2. Discourse Practice Analysis: Ideological Position and Legitimacy Strategy

The discourse practice analysis focuses on how the ideological positions of the actors—PBNU through Ulil Abshar Abdalla and environmental activist Iqbal Damanik—are constructed through language use and communication strategies to build legitimacy. Ulil, representing the largest religious organization in Indonesia, demonstrates a highly calculated stance. He builds the narrative that NU is not an ordinary political or economic actor but an organization grounded in values, deliberative traditions, and collective decisions. Through statements like “no final decision yet” and “will be discussed in official structures,” Ulil builds the legitimacy that every NU action must be based on a legal and structurally valid process. This strategy is crucial to counter criticisms that NU has entered the political game of natural resource management.

PBNU’s ideological position in this discourse is framed as representing Islam Wasathiyah—moderate, rational, and open to dialogue. Ulil utilizes these values to reinforce the notion that NU is not driven by economic power but is assessing whether the mining offer from the state provides potential benefits for the people. He also avoids directly mentioning ecological conflicts or indigenous victims, making the discourse more technocratic and disconnected from the lived realities of affected communities. This reflects PBNU’s ideological framing as a moral institution that still considers pragmatic aspects.

On the other hand, Iqbal Damanik positions himself ideologically as representing civil society critical of the state’s power structure and social elites. He uses the dialogue space to convey that “indigenous communities were never consulted” and that the involvement of religious organizations only strengthens inequality and legitimizes exploitative power. Iqbal’s legitimacy strategy is built through empirical data, the history of agrarian conflict, and references to concrete mining impacts across Indonesia. He also emphasizes that NU should stand with the people, not be part of a system that harms them. This shows that his discourse position is not only ecological but also political and ideological. This positional struggle is significant because both speak within a moral domain. While Ulil brings institutional morality, Iqbal brings moral experience—rooted in the suffering of indigenous communities and environmental damage. Discourse practice here is not merely a tool for exchanging

arguments but a means of shaping public perception about who has the authority to speak on ecological justice and sustainable development. PBNU's dominant position is supported by formal structure and symbolic access, while Iqbal's position is built on the strength of narrative and the urgency of change.

3. Social Practice Analysis: Political-Economic Context and Media Representation

The discussion between Ulil Abshar Abdalla and Iqbal Damanik on the ROSI program is inseparable from the broader socio-political context, specifically the government policy granting Special Mining Business License Areas (WIUPK) to religious organizations, including PBNU. This policy is part of the state's strategy to distribute natural resource wealth to various social groups, but it also raises concerns about the co-optation of moral institutions in extractive projects. In practice, the involvement of religious organizations like NU affects not only local economic structures but also the moral legitimacy of mining projects long opposed by many civil society groups. This process shows how the state's economic projects seek moral justification through symbolic partnerships with religious organizations.

Additionally, the social practice present in this discourse also relates to the unequal relationship between the center and the regions, particularly in resource management in eastern Indonesia, such as Raja Ampat. Known symbolically as the "last paradise" on Earth for its biodiversity, Raja Ampat is now threatened by potential nickel mining exploitation. In the discussion, Iqbal Damanik voiced concerns about central power dominance in decision-making, without active participation from indigenous or local communities directly affected. This indicates a social imbalance, where peripheral communities are often treated as development objects, not as subjects in the process.

Another notable social practice is the role of media as an institution that reproduces and structures the discursive space within this conflict. The ROSI program presented two discourse poles—religious institutions and environmental activists—within a television logic: concise narratives, polished visuals, and relatively balanced speaking time. While both speakers were given space to express their arguments, the visual framing and program structure positioned PBNU as more moderate and defensive, while Iqbal appeared as a critical and more emotional voice. This reflects how mainstream media plays a role in setting the boundaries of legitimacy for certain narratives and shapes public perception of who is authorized to speak on development and environmental issues.

In the broader social structure, the mining conflict in Raja Ampat is not only an environmental issue but also an intersection of identity politics, economic power, and

religious authority. NU's involvement brings a new dimension to the conflict, symbolizing that mining projects are no longer just the business of corporations and the state but have entered the moral institutions of the people. Conversely, voices like Iqbal's represent civil society resistance striving to protect living spaces from exploitation threats. Thus, this discourse extends the social dynamic where state power, civil forces, and religious institutions contend over the meaning of ecological justice.

Overall, the social practice in this discussion reflects complex power relations, with media serving as a site for symbolic negotiation, while speakers fight for ideological positions through carefully structured discourse. This process shows that environmental conflict is fought not only in physical spaces but also in symbolic realms of media, language, and public representation. Therefore, understanding the social practice of this debate helps explain how language is used to frame interests, construct authority, and negotiate legitimacy in the context of natural resource conflicts in Indonesia.

Level of Analysis	Key Findings	Explanation
Text	Differences in diction and framing between PBNU and the activist	Ulil Abshar Abdalla uses phrases such as "internal review," "no final decision yet," and "deliberation" to frame PBNU as a cautious and procedural institution. In contrast, Iqbal Damanik employs expressions like "destruction of living space" and "victims of state policy" to articulate resistance against NU's involvement in mining. Ulil's rhetorical style is systematic and defensive, while Iqbal's is critical and rooted in field-based evidence.
Discursive Practice	Legitimization strategies and ideological position contestation	Ulil builds legitimacy by emphasizing the internal decision-making process of the organization, distancing PBNU from active support of mining projects, and highlighting institutional morality. Meanwhile, Iqbal constructs resistance discourse by presenting data on environmental conflict and ecological damage, and questioning the moral standing of NU if it aligns with extractive industries. Both engage in discursive struggles for authority in the public sphere.
Social Practice	Power asymmetry in mining policy and the role of media as a site of representation	The debate reflects an imbalance between central and local powers, as the WIUPK policy excludes local communities from decision-making. NU is positioned as a moral elite aligned with state interests, while the activist represents civil resistance. Although Kompas TV provides equal speaking time, the narrative and visual framing tend to favor institutional rationality. This illustrates how media space functions as both a site for elite legitimacy and a platform for resistance articulation.

Table 1. Critical Discourse Analysis of the ROSI Broadcast – "Debate Between PBNU and Activists on Nickel Mining in Raja Ampat"

Source: Youtube [kompas.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...), 2025

The research findings show that environmental conflict communication in the ROSI program reflects a discursive struggle between religious institutions and environmental

activists in defining legitimacy over the mining project in Raja Ampat. Ulil Abshar Abdalla, representing PBNU, used discursive strategies based on institutional caution and collective procedures to dispel public suspicion. Meanwhile, Iqbal Damanik, as an environmental activist, emphasized field experiences and ecological impacts as the foundation of criticism against the power structure and state legitimacy. Differences in framing and diction reflect opposing ideological positions, as affirmed by Fairclough (1995), who stated that discourse is a social practice that reflects power relations. This broadcast shows that language is not just a means of conveying messages but also a tool for maintaining political positions in resource conflicts. Thus, environmental conflict communication is not merely argumentative but also symbolic and structural.

This discussion reinforces previous studies highlighting that mining conflicts are not only economic or technical issues but also involve representation structures and elite actor influence. Kurniawan's (2020) study found that mining projects often proceed without meaningful local community involvement, legitimized by development narratives from state and institutional elites. In this context, PBNU, as a major mass organization, brings moral legitimacy to projects laden with ecological and agrarian conflicts. On the other hand, Iqbal constructs a counter-narrative emphasizing indigenous rights and ecological sustainability, consistent with findings from Nurdin and YGP (2020), which show that civil movements play a key role in challenging dominant state narratives. These differing positions also show how religious organizations can experience ambivalence between moral idealism and political-economic realities. Therefore, NU's involvement in the mining discourse raises ethical and structural questions about the direction of religious institutions' alignment in environmental justice issues.

Media as a discourse production space also plays a strategic role in shaping public perception of this conflict. Kompas TV, through the ROSI program, provided space for two opposing narratives, but visual framing and speaking time favored established institutions. This shows that media is not always neutral but tends to reproduce existing power structures, as described by Hendrasani (2023) in studies on media and state institutions. The program represented PBNU as a rational actor, while activists like Iqbal appeared as strong yet marginalized voices. Thus, media representation becomes part of the social practice that shapes symbolic legitimacy over mining projects. Within the CDA framework, this reinforces the idea that media is a hegemonic arena where meaning battles occur between domination and resistance.

Another important aspect emerging from the study is the absence of direct representation of indigenous Papuan communities in the discussion space. The program did not involve representatives from affected communities, and their voices were only indirectly presented through activist narratives. This reflects a case of epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007), where certain groups are denied the opportunity to express their own experiences and perspectives. Previous studies by Ulat et al. (2024) and Pratama (2022) also show that local communities are often treated merely as development objects, not decision-making subjects. In this context, mainstream media and social elites tend to obscure the structural conflicts that are actually taking place. Therefore, this study affirms the importance of bringing peripheral voices into public discourse so that ecological conflicts can be discussed more fairly and comprehensively.

Conceptually, this research contributes to environmental communication studies by emphasizing that resource conflicts can be understood not only through policy or physical impacts but also through how language is used to frame reality. These findings affirm that environmental conflict communication is multidimensional: ideological, symbolic, and structural. In the Indonesian context, the involvement of religious organizations in mining projects is a relatively new issue and has not been extensively examined from a critical discourse communication perspective. Therefore, the novelty of this research lies in its effort to link environmental conflict with media representation and the symbolic position of religious elites in public discourse. The research gap in prior studies, which tended to emphasize technical and legal aspects, has been bridged through a more critical and contextual discourse analysis approach. This study thus broadens our understanding of the dynamics of ecological conflict in the era of extractive capitalism cloaked in moral legitimacy.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that environmental conflict communication in the ROSI Kompas TV broadcast represents a discourse struggle between religious institutions and civil society in contesting legitimacy over the nickel mining issue in Raja Ampat. Through Fairclough's (1995) critical discourse analysis, it was found that differences in diction, framing, and rhetorical strategies used by PBNU and environmental activists reflect opposing ideological positions. PBNU positions itself as a rational and procedural institution, while Iqbal Damanik appears as the voice of resistance against ecological exploitation legitimized by the state. The media's role in this context is not neutral; rather, it serves as a hegemonic space that reproduces power structures through narrative representations favoring institutional actors.

The absence of indigenous voices in this public discussion shows that representational inequality remains a fundamental issue in environmental communication in Indonesia.

Thus, this study affirms that natural resource conflicts cannot be separated from the socio-political structures that shape them, including the involvement of religious elites, media communication strategies, and the state's role in setting the direction of extractive policies. The discourses emerging in mainstream media like Kompas TV create discursive boundaries on which narratives are considered legitimate in discussing development and ecological justice. Therefore, environmental communication is not only a matter of scientific information or advocacy but also an ideological and political process.

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