

Environmental Law Communication: Strategies for Advocacy

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ABSTRACT

Environmental law has become increasingly complex and globally relevant due to the growing number of treaties, protocols, and legal frameworks that address environmental degradation. Despite the importance of these legal instruments, communication surrounding them particularly in the context of advocacy has received limited scholarly attention. This paper examines the strategic role of communication in environmental law advocacy, examining how legal practitioners, organizations, and civil society actors frame environmental issues for legal, political, and public audiences. The study highlights how digital media, stakeholder coalitions, and targeted litigation communications influence public perception and policymaking. It analyzes case studies from both developed and developing nations to showcase successful advocacy techniques and identifies persistent challenges in framing, stakeholder engagement, and impact measurement. The paper concludes by proposing a framework for improving environmental law communication strategies, integrating digital tools, coalition-building approaches, and adaptive messaging to enhance advocacy effectiveness across various legal and socio-political contexts.

Keywords: Environmental law, advocacy communication, litigation communication, digital media, public engagement, legal framing, coalition-building.

INTRODUCTION

Environmental law addresses human activities' impact on the environment at the local, national, and global levels. It forms a complex set of international treaties, regional and national legislation, and local laws. This process requires rules and regulations beyond business control to protect the environment from potential damage. Therefore, advisors and advocates play a valuable role in creating understanding, exploring options, and developing approaches between parties interested in finding mutually acceptable solutions. Thus, there are textual demands and opportunities specific to environmental law communication, in which lexico-grammatical and discursive features realize communicative purposes. However, such requirements have not received great attention in professional or scholarly fora. The first argument refers to the global topicality of environmental law communication. Recently, there has been a rather huge increase in the complexity and number of international, regional, and national environmental treaties, conventions, protocols, and laws. Such complexity has presented obstacles to the interpretation and understanding of international, regional, and national environmental law and legislation. As a result, the global topicality of environmental law communication has increased tremendously. Environmental infractions and disasters in developing and emerging countries have brought attention to outside assistance in tackling the management of the environment. Nations that had been formerly too poor to pollute are now attempting incredibly rapid industrialization or poverty alleviation efforts in various transition economies. Addressing environmental lapses in industrialized nations and developing nations requires specifically tailored advocacy. However, its textual situativity has not been stipulated as extensively as in the other branches of law [1, 2].

The Importance of Communication in Advocacy

In the field of environmental law, communication is key to professional success. Positional experience and limited-time internships or clerkships can give interns and soon-to-be attorneys exposure to the practice of environmental law; however, many students, interns, and new attorneys are not aware of the role

communication plays in effective advocacy. Civil service organizations often have difficulty communicating the importance of their work to their audience, which then hinders their social outreach. All too often, public interest groups lack the ability to accurately portray the importance of their activities to a broader and technical audience. As a future attorney practicing within the environmental law sector, this concern for articulating technical arguments in a new light and making them public will persist. Aiding in advocacy, effective communication techniques could help protect users with the proper tools to leverage their advocacy—whether they are representing a big organization or an individual citizen. Good communication techniques help public interest attorneys build their client's case, organize, and conduct outreach and education to interested communities, and leverage that into calls for action or further participation. All while increasing their client's standing in the public, garnering support, and deterring opposition. In an evolving world of social media and technological change, the landscape for communication is shifting. While the arms race for online public discourse grows amongst estates, the legal community has yet to bear this burden. Understanding how new technologies, like social media, shape how audiences receive, engage with, and act upon legal and quasi-legal messages is critical to understanding improved communication strategies. Organizations attempting to act upon a decision in opposing legislation, litigation, or lobbying efforts will need to be able to quickly build the public discourse around that decision in grassroots and mass-public ways. This creates two separate phenomena wherein organizations must be aware of their message and prepare it to dominate their audience's narrative. Communication experts ought to augment their communication strategies with an understanding of the nuances of the legal system's effect on their message and strategy, couched in litigation communication knowledge [3, 4].

Key Stakeholders in Environmental Advocacy

Environmental advocacy is of keen interest to many citizens who aim to influence local environmental issues. This study examines how pro-environment groups utilize political opportunities to engage in local environmental policymaking. Local environmental issues, such as air and water pollution and municipal service delivery, are often contentious and prominently featured in the news. Costs and benefits associated with these issues are frequently unevenly distributed, disproportionately impacting lower-income and marginalized neighborhoods. This situation complicates the role of local government in addressing complex problems effectively. Many local officials lack expertise and resources to grasp the full implications of these issues. While local ordinances address environmental concerns through the concept of sustainability, the term can lead to vague resolutions and contentious political battles. Municipalities often delay action on significant environmental issues, despite their importance to constituents. Empowering decentralized local authorities may enhance public participation, but pro-environment advocates still face challenges in maintaining influence at this level. They may struggle to hold local governments accountable, as rules and processes are typically more accessible at higher government levels. This raises important questions about citizen participation in local environmental advocacy, particularly in the context of limited support structures [5, 6].

Effective Communication Strategies

argues that, in light of the multiple and complex global crises facing humanity, new and effective communicators are needed to promote environmental law and provide hope and solutions. Public professionals are called upon, and, for that reason, environmental law communication strategies, or legal ecologies with green citizenship dialogue and claims-making strategies, are suggested. The dialogue, or in this case, proclamation, with 10 suggestions about future orientations to enhance the former comfort and to address, with hope and love, the actual crises, was prepared for dissemination through a variety of channels. A call for a legal ecology, inspired by human ecology and based on a systemically democratic constitutional theory, emphasizes the critical role of a distributive government. Legal ecologies, that is, Argentina, Japan, the U.S., and the European Union are introduced. A breakdown based on benefits, costs, and hazards of implementing national and territorial aquatic environmental laws in harmony with global and regional institutions is presented. In addition, the landmark Judiciary-sanctioned environment public interest litigation case calling for more stringent enforcement of the Environmental Protecting Law is discussed. Bridging law and politics, committed judges note standards generally effectuated and delay adoption of a new measure through reprimand. Efforts with green citizenship claiming rights revolved around public comprehension and participation are described, touching on training participatory lawyering. In closing, request and hope for further communication and collaboration in this regard present themselves, and tragic miscalculations leading to catastrophe are humbly deprecated. New

environmental laws are conceived, with a special ad hoc committee convened to complete them within a year and a half [7, 8].

Legal Frameworks Influencing Communication

Environmental issues are both complex and wide-ranging, requiring sustained public interest and focus. For this reason, many environmental organizations undertake communication efforts with the intent of increasing awareness and understanding of, and concerns about, an issue. This study examined the communication work done by environmental organizations involved in legal action surrounding a controversial construction project in upstate New York. The analysis identified major themes and messages from the organizations' communication efforts. While emphasizing the importance of different themes, each organization used litigation communication more as a tool to share the legal aspects of the case than about specific environmental facts or concerns. Organizations emphasized themes of environmental justice, Indigenous rights, and procedural issues, but diminishing the importance of traditional environmental themes throughout the litigation process. The study also found that organizations increase their litigation communication with media coverage and messaging predominantly item of an organization or an organization's connections. Environmental issues can seem distant, complicated, or overwhelming. Thus, effective communication is essential for any public engagement or advocacy strategy to garner public support for an agreement or action. While many environmental organizations engage in extensive public communications related to their advocacy or lobbying work, much less is known about their communication work surrounding litigation efforts. In recognition of this gap, this analysis asked, how are environmental organizations communicating about their litigation against the Construction Project? How do the themes and messages of these communications vary among organizations? Strategies for litigation communications depend on an organization's communication infrastructure yet highlight timing and framing considerations across organizations as a result of publicly recognized media interests. Environmental organizations are beacons of hope, shining a light on troubling behavior and calling society to action. Communication about ongoing litigation is crucial to managing the public narrative and ensuring continued support for prolonged litigation efforts [9, 10].

Case Studies of Successful Advocacy

Environmental organizations leverage online platforms to mobilize support for climate advocacy, heavily using framing to enhance their strategies. They employ motivating frames to urge action and accountability frames to target disapproved political figures. This framing is crucial for shaping the media narrative surrounding climate change. As the media perception of environmental organizations evolves, there's a noticeable shift towards litigation as a strategy to tackle climate issues. In a polarized political climate, organizations may need to adjust their narrative in response to backlash from fossil fuel companies. Recognizing the significance of framing can enhance our comprehension of online communications in promoting environmental law. Climate-related litigation has recently emerged in advocacy, with cases like "Giorgiana M. Hironimus, et al. vs. The State of Oklahoma" and "The City of New York vs. The Exxons and Chevrans" exemplifying this trend. This novelty creates gaps in understanding what influences success or failure. Further research is needed regarding the dissemination of information on litigated climate controversies via alternative media, coordination of messaging among advocating organizations, and identification of content producers. Expanding the study of public expression must incorporate diverse methods rather than solely relying on scientific correlations. One under-explored aspect is understanding the framing used in climate law communications online. There's limited insight into the frames employed by organizations advocating specific legal approaches within legislatures and courts. As technology evolves, the relevance of framing becomes increasingly vital. Current research on environmental organizations' litigation communication could benefit those engaged in this strategy. Additionally, recognizing how organizations' efforts intersect or contrast with others pursuing different options may help preempt opposition before it grows stronger [11, 12].

Challenges In Environmental Advocacy

Despite their environmental wins, groups often reserve their "major" claims for a few select events, focusing advocacy on high-profile occasions that yield larger public interest rather than connecting smaller events into a cohesive campaign. Audiences engage more with significant events opposing powerful adversaries than with everyday harm cases lacking deep conflict or notable policy changes. The framing choices reflect groups' perceptions of their contexts, with few scholars bridging journalism and law. It's unclear how organizations can fulfill demands for accessible information while addressing smaller court victories, but practical guidance can assist in adopting better practices. Organizations should

communicate their advocacy in “sententional” ways, and empirical support suggests a focus on plant-centered framing in environmental advocacy. Public relations scholars examine social media strategies, shedding light on how emphasizing a notable plant in tweets can be effective. Scholars and practitioners should explore the dual role of environmental advocates as moral experts and institutional insiders. Given the numerous organizations, weighing capacity and expertise could seem like a zero-sum decision. Environmental organizations should consider this, as many emerged positively from crises, evidenced by rising institutional, public, and media interest in pressing change [13, 14].

Digital Communication and Technology

Digital communication is an important tool for environmental advocates. Many environmental advocates already communicate with followers, neighbors, and officials via email, Twitter, Facebook, and other digital platforms. However, environmental advocates can make better use of digital communication tools to improve public engagement and build advocacy networks. Social Media Tips. Social media can increase awareness, inform, and engage people regarding environmental issues. As environmental advocates consider which social media platforms to use and how to best use them, various social media platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Flickr, Second Life, and blogs, can be used for environmental advocacy. YouTube can be used to create video shorts and animations or highlight local environmental challenges. Twitter is an excellent way to engage in conversations and provide alerts and updates. Facebook connects communities via topic groups and offers a format for sharing news and action items. Flickr is useful for sharing and discussing photographs, while blogs provide a platform for posting articles, diaries, and updates. More Detailed Web Communication Approaches. Recognizing that use of the Internet and the web varies widely among local organizations, some more detailed approaches to creating web content can benefit environmentally concerned citizens or organizational leaders just beginning to create or improve their web pages. These approaches also educate and provide professional development. These approaches include creating a sophisticated web page, activating technical assistance resources, creating and using an environmental WebKit, leveraging existent web content and organizations, and sharing precautions [15, 16].

Building Coalitions and Partnerships

Audience Building Coalitions with Public Allies, Organizers Movement Builders offers insights into enhancing participation in social change through coalitions. This paper presents research aiding coalitions in defining outreach limits and metrics to assess strategies for their goals. Essential questions for coalitions include: Who is our target audience? What are their geographic boundaries? What joint issues do we share? What is the character of the coalition? Who are our audience contacts? What are their interests? How can we connect theirs to ours? What do allies seek from the coalition? What outreach techniques will we employ? Which strategy will effectively galvanize constituents? To explore outreach, coalitions can identify shared interests among their members. The situation in October indicates that organizations may pursue new outreach methods, with or without coalition involvement. President Bush’s proposed amendments raised alarms among environmentalists regarding the influence of faith communities. Unlike traditional groups, engaging with faith leaders might resonate with themes like stewardship and justice. Addressing group ownership and control is essential to incorporate faith groups while balancing grassroots efforts and race-focused narratives. Outreach should engage multiple audiences, as group identity can align diverse interests and values. Forest narratives can connect natural populations across boundaries. Realigning with traditional institutions may benefit environmental efforts with faith communities. However, a manufactured Ecocracy might reinforce prevailing control rather than foster sustainable futures. Initially, outreach might concentrate on a specific issue before expanding to broader challenges, avoiding polarization in political dialogue. Effective coalition campaigns can bridge emerging issues with long-term concerns [17, 18].

Measuring The Impact of Advocacy Efforts

Measuring the impact of advocacy efforts is complex, with challenges that practitioners must explore. Environmental organizations in the U.S. have engaged in litigation against the Trump administration, yet the communication aspect of this litigation remains largely unstudied. Analyzing how these organizations communicated during 12 key cases sheds light on this overlooked area. Different organizations frame their legal efforts uniquely, prompting further analysis. They utilize social media and websites to mobilize supporters, in addition to sending targeted emails. These platforms allow them to share messages with supporters, the media, and the public. On social media, they employ framing, a strategy that highlights specific issue aspects while downplaying others, thus guiding public

interpretation. Motivational frames are used to call supporters to action, while accountability frames target disapproved political figures. Framing is crucial for managing the media narrative [19, 20].

Future Trends in Environmental Advocacy

Environmental advocacy is evolving in response to urgent crises and new media developments. Key trends include the integration of environmental and social justice issues and innovative strategies that enhance the content, context, and scope of advocacy. Advocates are utilizing hybrid approaches that combine traditional methods with an awareness of a political landscape that often undermines scientific credibility. This includes addressing concerns from dissenting groups and shaping the narratives around environmental topics. New partnerships with organizations interested in broader issues are essential for finding common ground. Hybrid advocacy employs a variety of strategies to enhance relevance and impact while addressing challenges in audience engagement. This approach involves framing advocacy to increase the consequences for elites who might otherwise suppress environmental messages. As a result, there has been an increase in environmental media, particularly on social platforms, leading to moments of heightened audience participation on specific issues. During these moments, advocates launch campaigns to seize media narratives and stimulate public discourse. However, litigating bodies remain largely absent from these strategies due to restrictions on reporting case statuses. While activists in renewables are encouraged to blend legal actions with their broader advocacy, legal teams often seem detached from communications, focusing on traditional dialogues. Some organizations have initiated hybrid outreach efforts recognizing the bigger picture, but these initiatives remain limited, highlighting significant gaps within the legal outreach field. There is potential for better coordination between litigation communication and non-legal outreach, as well as exploring alternative methods to enhance media strategies for litigation [21, 22].

Ethical Considerations in Advocacy

Environmental practitioners navigate a complex landscape of ethics, law, and interests, balancing client needs with the public good. They wield influence and advocacy, capable of effecting positive or negative change in critical issues. Legislative and agency decisions impact people, ecosystems, and the environment. Often, those harmed by pollution face challenges in seeking justice against powerful offenders. Altruistic advocacy for marginalized causes is commendable, as is the work of skilled lawyers who champion the voiceless and strive for equity between social needs and ecological concerns. Attorneys defending clients in environmental protests may employ various legal defenses, challenge jurisdiction, and seek to undermine opposition through technical arguments and expert testimony. In contrast, proponents of waste treatment facilities may utilize a different approach, engaging experts and public relations firms to sway public opinion and politicians in their favor. During legal proceedings, they can present arguments regarding chemical safety, venue selection, and public health to strengthen their case. Public officials may face serious allegations of conspiracy or collusion, adding another layer of complexity to the environmental legal landscape [23, 24].

Training and Capacity Building

Training practitioners in ELC and participatory rights-based advocacy can significantly enhance research and engagement efforts. Tailoring training to various participation stages is beneficial; for instance, guidance on using the ELC framework for specific research projects or consultation-focused engagements. This training should clarify how the ELC framework interrelates with other frameworks related to vertebrate protection, climate science, and natural gas. Contextualizing training within specific constitutional, legal, and social environments will enrich practitioners' understanding. It is essential to maintain core ELC theories and principles to ensure versatility in application across diverse settings. As ELC was initially developed as an analytical study tool rather than an advocacy method, its implementation in advocacy remains limited. Therefore, exploring a collaborative, need-based advocacy approach for diverse socio-political contexts may inspire further research. Additionally, building capacity in civil societies, academia, and media on procedural law and media engagement is crucial for effective ELC implementation. In lower-income nations, mentoring or professional internships may enhance capacity building. Outreach resources should illustrate how advocacy materials can support long-term capacity development tailored to local socio-political realities, integrating these efforts into ELC implementation tasks [25, 26].

The Role of Education in Advocacy

Education plays a vital role in environmental advocacy for many NGOs. Nonprofits contribute significantly to environmental protection through research, public engagement in science, and conservation efforts. Some studies indicate that grassroots conservation organizations may adopt scientific information at a slower rate, highlighting the potential of educational outreach as an advocacy tool. Education encompasses information transfer that leads to behavioral change. In environmental contexts, outreach often involves educating audiences with facts to encourage actions aimed at reducing environmental harm. Such initiatives can lead to immediate action or promote informed activities like whale watching. However, few studies have thoroughly examined how education acts as advocacy. Not all knowledge acquisition leads to prosocial behaviors, and changing beliefs about environmental systems necessitates deeper scientific literacy than what typical educational efforts provide. Educational campaigns demand more resources than other advocacy methods, especially in contexts where technical challenges are present. Introducing advanced advocacy within educational programs can risk negative reactions from audiences. Education has become crucial for actors engaged in multi-media advocacy strategies. For example, scientists lobbying on climate change and community counselors opposing chemical waste site relocations have achieved better results when combining lobbying efforts with grassroots educational outreach. The aims of such education vary, but it generally serves to promote specific agendas within communities [27, 28].

CONCLUSION

Effective communication is a critical tool for advancing environmental law advocacy in today's multifaceted legal and technological landscape. As environmental issues grow more urgent and complex, legal practitioners and advocacy organizations must refine how they frame and disseminate messages to mobilize public opinion, influence policy, and shape legal outcomes. Strategic use of digital platforms, litigation communication, stakeholder engagement, and coalition-building can amplify advocacy efforts and overcome the limitations of traditional legal discourse. The evolving nature of media and law necessitates that environmental advocates remain agile, thoughtful, and inclusive in their messaging. This paper emphasizes the importance of building communication infrastructures that not only translate technical legal matters into accessible narratives but also foster participatory dialogue, transparency, and sustained impact. Strengthening environmental law communication ultimately empowers communities, elevates marginalized voices, and fosters systemic legal change toward environmental sustainability.

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