Perspectives of Mining and Communication:
Identifying Constructivity and Destructivity of Conflicts in the Akyem and Wassa Areas in Ghana

Ludrick Kwadwo Gyapong
Perspectives of Mining and Communication: Identifying Constructivity and Destructivity of Conflicts in the Akyem and Wassa Areas in Ghana

Ludrick Kwadwo Gyapong

Supervisor: Dr. Lars Hallgren
Evaluator: Dr Hans Peter Hansen
Content

Abstract .................................................................................................................................................. ii
Summary ............................................................................................................................................... iii
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................................... iv
1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................................. 1
1.1 GHANA ........................................................................................................................................ 4
1.2 Statement of the Problem ............................................................................................................... 6
1.3 Objectives ...................................................................................................................................... 8
2 METHODOLOGY ............................................................................................................................. 9
2.1 Data Collection .............................................................................................................................. 9
2.1.1 Semi-structured Interviews and Questionnaires ..................................................................... 9
2.1.2 Documents .............................................................................................................................. 9
2.2 Data Analysis ................................................................................................................................ 9
2.3 Defining Strained and Cordial Relationships .............................................................................. 10
2.4 Limitations ................................................................................................................................... 10
3 THEORY ........................................................................................................................................... 11
3.1 Symbolic Interactionism .............................................................................................................. 12
3.2 Communicative Action ................................................................................................................ 12
3.3 Deliberative Democracy .............................................................................................................. 13
4. DISCUSSION ................................................................................................................................... 15
4.1 Politics and Policy ....................................................................................................................... 15
4.2 Power and power relations .......................................................................................................... 18
4.3 Perspectives and Relationships .................................................................................................... 19
4.3.1 Akyem Area ......................................................................................................................... 20
4.3.2 Wassa Area ........................................................................................................................... 24
4.4 Action and Reaction .................................................................................................................... 26
4.5 Communication and Deliberation ................................................................................................ 28
5 CONCLUSION ................................................................................................................................... 31
References ............................................................................................................................................ 33
List of Figures

Figure 1: relationships and perceptions of actors ................................................................. 11
Figure 2: understanding dynamics of relationships and communication .............................. 17
Figure 3: perspectives and relationships in Akyem .............................................................. 29
Figure 4: perspectives and relationships in Wassa ............................................................... 32

Abbreviations

CSR    Corporate Social Responsibility
ENGO   Environmental Non-Governmental Organisation
EPA    Environmental Protection Agency
FIAN   FoodFirst Information and Action Network
GBN    Ghana Business News
GDP    Gross domestic product
GNA    Ghana News Agency
GSR    Golden Star Resources
IEA    Institute of Economic Affairs
IFC    International Finance Corporation
IMF    International Monetary Fund
NGGL   Newmont Gold Ghana Limited
NGO    Non-Governmental Organisation
NRM    Natural resource management
OECD   Organization for Economic Cooperation
PNDC   Provisional National Defence Council
UPR    Universal Periodic Review
WACAM  Wassa Association of Communities Affected by Mining
Perspectives of Mining and Communication: Identifying Constructivity and Destructivity of Conflicts in the Akyem and Wassa Areas in Ghana

LUDRICK KWADWO GYAPONG

Gyapong L.K., 2013: Perspectives of Mining and Communication: Identifying Constructivity and Destructivity of Conflicts in the Akyem and Wassa Areas in Ghana. Master thesis in Sustainable Development at Uppsala University, No. 114, 39 pp., 30 ECTS/hp

Abstract

Over several centuries, mining activities have resulted in the creation of varied environmental complications. Most mining activities are carried out in locations with proximity to human settlements. The interplay of mining activity and society has created several mining-related conflicts throughout the world, and in developing countries especially, these conflicts are much prevalent. These conflicts could be analysed in a variety of ways: analyzing the conflicts based on goals, interests and value interference; or on the bases of issues related to interaction between two or more parties.

This paper takes into consideration the two concepts of constructivity and destructivity of conflicts as they relate to natural resource management and indicate that it is possible for a country or society like Ghana to discover constructive potential in a phenomenon that is mostly deemed destructive. The conflict situations in two mining communities (Akyem and Wassa) are taken into consideration for this paper. This does not deal with issues of conflict management, rather, it takes a look into the interaction between these communities and the associated mining company to determine whether the relationship between them possess constructive or destructive potentials.

Based on interviews and information available on the internet, this paper determines that there exist elements of constructivity and destructivity in both areas. In the Akyem area, the destructive aspects reside in the relationship between Newmont and the Wassa Association of Communities Affected by Mining (WACAM). The relationship between Newmont and the local representatives take on a constructive aspect. Even though there is some sort of tension between the local people and Newmont, the situation can still be considered as constructive because they are still able to engage in dialogue in an attempt to coexist. In the Wassa area on the other hand, the story is different thus taken a destructive nature between Golden Star Resources and the communities. The involvement of the government however presents an opportunity for constructivity in the situation.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, constructivity, destructivity, trust, cordial relationship, strained relationship

Ludrick Kwadwo Gyapong, Department of Earth Sciences, Uppsala University, Villavägen 16, SE- 752 36 Uppsala, Sweden
Perspectives of Mining and Communication: Identifying Constructivity and Destructivity of Conflicts in the Akyem and Wassa Areas in Ghana

LUDRICK KWADWO GYAPONG

Gyapong L.K., 2013: Perspectives of Mining and Communication: Identifying Constructivity and Destructivity of Conflicts in the Akyem and Wassa Areas in Ghana. Master thesis in Sustainable Development at Uppsala University, No. 114, 39 pp., 30 ECTS/hp

Summary

Since the Brundtland Commission published its report in 1987, sustainable development has become a guiding principle for many organisations. Sustainability at the present age is at the heart of most organisational goals, and in the mining industry, it has become a prominent concept. Every society that aims to achieve sustainability must have mechanisms to deal with conflict. This paper takes an analytical view into the issue of mining related conflicts and indicates that it is possible to discover constructive potential in a concept which is mostly deemed destructive.

This paper uses theories in environmental communication to analyse the perspectives of parties involved in these conflicts to assess the kind of relationships and level extent of disputes in the Akyem and Wassa mining communities in Ghana. This paper also makes connections with these theories to determine the constructive and destructive potentials of these situations.

The fundamental principle surrounding constructivity is that parties are able to achieve some sort of understanding of each others’ perspectives in order for them to build consensus on issues. Constructivity on the other hand depicts situations that conduces parties to view each others’ perspectives with disdain and inhibits parties from achieving consensus on issues. The underlying issues is that not all conflict situations are destructive, but an avenue for possible positive change; and this can help a society like Ghana identify constructive potentials in conflict situations.

If analysed using constructive and destructive concepts, it is possible to make instrumental change to policy that would allow people to make changes in the manner in which they perceive and act towards the actions and perspectives of parties they view as enemies or adversaries. The study concluded that even though conflicts exist in both Akyem and Wassa areas, the issues vary thus making it possible to identify the constructive and destructive aspects of both areas. What is most important is that both areas exhibit constructive and destructive strengths.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, constructivity, destructivity, trust, cordial relationship, strained relationship

Ludrick Kwadwo Gyapong, Department of Earth Sciences, Uppsala University, Villavägen 16, SE- 752 36 Uppsala, Sweden
Acknowledgement

My utmost thanks go to the Lord almighty for His protection, favour, love and mercies. Special thanks go to my supervisor Lars Hallgren, for his excellent supervision and guidelines through my masters program. Lars has been instrumental in shaping my ideas about environmental communication and issues that relate to constructive or destructive conflict situations. Even though there was not enough time, Lars made time to read my work and provide me with guidelines that increased my understanding of conflicts related to natural resources. I also give thanks to Per Berg for reading and evaluating my thesis.

I want to give show my appreciation to Afia Serwaa Adjei-Acheampong and Mark Baah Haywood for their help in gathering data for my thesis. It would have been an impossible task without them, and I am truly grateful. For this same purpose, I would like to thank Victor Gyapong and Frederick Addai Opoku from Newmont Ghana, and Mike Anane from FIAN for granting me interviews.

My deepest appreciation also goes to the following people with whom I have shared ideas and time with – Kwabena Baffoe, Humphrey Agblede, Joseph Osei, Raghul Madhaiyan, Kiminari Onodera, and Yuliya Zhuk. I am grateful to you people for the nice time we shared, and the assistances I gained from being associated with you.

Special thanks go to my family in Ghana; I thank my parents, William and Nora; my sisters Sylvia, Elisabeth, and Eleanor, and my cousin Kwame Eyeson for their sacrifices, support and prayers.

God bless you all

Ludrick Kwadwo Gyapong

Uppsala, January 2013.
1 INTRODUCTION

For centuries, mining was and has been the engine of economic growth for many societies; it thus helped to engender nations. As it provided growth to societies, its activities also created several environmental and climatic ill effects. Notwithstanding the economic benefits attributed to the activity, it has also spawned conflicts and wars amongst nations and amongst communities and agencies within nations. The growth of the mining industry also lead to an accretion in the environmental implications of such activities, and by the middle of the 20th century, awareness had been created about the environmental and social problem associated with it. In 1984, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) was established as an international organisation independent of the United Nation (UN) to focus on environmental and developmental problems; and in 1987, it published the Brundtland Report. Since its publication, the Our Common Future (Brundtland Report) has set out the guiding principles of Sustainable development. The report defines sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. With increasing awareness on human rights, climate change and depleting global natural resources, the Brundtland Report established the guiding parameters for corporations, agriculture and production industries. It thus catalysed sustainability to become a dominant concept in political and environmental discourses because of its focus on exploitation of natural resources, poverty and economic inequalities. (Laura, et al., 2009)

Gold mining has generated income for mining companies, local people and the government of Ghana. The activity also possesses several complexes ranging from risk of environmental destruction to pollution of ground and surface water; and because Ghana has a large section of the population engaged in agriculture, these effects have the tendency to affect the agricultural populace. In effect, there is tension among the parties that are involved in, or affected by mining activities. Different actors have emerged to be involved in these tensions and basically perceive themselves to be concerned by the effects of gold mining. Sometimes, these actors disagree on issues of risk management and also about legitimacy in influencing decision-making processes in gold mining concerns. These disagreements can potentially develop into constructive change processes but sometimes the conflict dynamics amongst the actors inhibit rational decision making and consume resources in a destructive way. Even though it is vital to analyse gold mining and its effects on society and the environment, this paper essentially looks into issues related to states of disagreement between mining companies and local communities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Ghana. Several centuries of mining has provided great evidence on the harm this activity has on the environment; this paper however, does not touch on possible methods of reducing environmental effects of mining, or on issues of property rights distribution. It is also important to note that even though this paper touches on issues of conflict, it alienates itself from the concept of Conflict Resolution and focuses on processes that define conflict as either constructive or destructive in terms of natural resource management. This may include issues in policy initiatives, public participation and analysis of perspectives of all parties involved in the conflict situation; and in this case the mining companies, local communities, government agencies and the EPA. There have been several instances where mining-related conflicts have not been resolved; it is therefore essential to analyse the state of the conflict (i.e. constructive or destructive) in order to take the appropriate steps towards resolution of such conflicts. The primary focus of this paper is to investigate the dynamics of these disagreements based on communication and debates that result from social interaction amongst the actors. This would help to ascertain these disagreements within the gold mining industry possess a constructive or destructive form.
In environmental communication, constructivity and destructivity depicts social interaction of two fundamentally different characters. Constructivity emphasizes social interactions which contribute to increased understanding of perspectives, goals, concerns, values, estimations, assumptions and emotions amongst parties involved. It involves acceptance and understanding of critiques to an action or statement by individuals or groups deemed opposition. This is done by the transfer of information amongst the opposing parties, thus possessing the ability to promote change. Constructivity in conflict explains situations whereby the parties involved in conflict are able to achieve some form of success in their ability to analyse and comprehend the other party’s perceptions and actions through available platforms, even in the midst of disagreement. This is only possible when actors maintain a cordial relationship and trust, thus making it possible to view each others’ perspectives and actions as action and perspectives of parties in opposition and not as those of enemies. In a way, constructivity could be related to what Chantal Mouffe refers to as Agonism. According to her, agonism is a conflict within the political setting that potentially makes provision for positive expression of a disagreement (Miessen, 2009). Within a well-functioning democratic society, there is always a resonate encounter of ideas and principles. In this view, different parties involved in a disagreement or a potential conflict are able to accommodate the other party’s ideals or positions on specific issues (Jezeirska, 2011). Destructivity on the other hand puts emphasis on social interactions which conduces actors to diminish their understanding of each others’ perspectives and concerns. This is mainly due to exhibition of resistance to an action by opposing parties. This reduces the transferability of information, learning possibilities, and understanding of perspectives, thus creating and increasing tensions and polarized perspectives without investigating validity claims. In such scenarios, parties in conflict are unable to achieve any success in interpreting and understanding the perspectives and actions of each other. In certain extreme instances, it ends up in the use of physical violence as an action or a response to an action (Hallgren, 2012). In essence, existing trust between the parties decreases with time in addition to the difficulty inherent in the ability to understand the opinion of the other party.

The mining industry, being in the extraction and production industry has been heavily criticised about the apparent environmental and social implications of such activities, but most mining related conflicts border on flashpoints of issues related to rights of people, compensation, resettlement, corruption, excessive political clout, and health and environment. Where ever there is mining activity and local communities, there is bound to be conflict based on these proponents; and corporations that have exhibited strength in the areas of community engagement, human rights and environmental responsibility, backed by their superior financial and political influence do not seem to be immune to such conflict situations (Kemp and Gotzmann, 2008). This is due to intensified awareness on resource depletion and the environmental and climatic impacts associated with mining activities. There have also been several debates on social negligence on the part of mining companies. One of the major mining-related conflicts occurred in Papua New Guinea. In terms of environmental concerns, riverine deposition of mining waste and tailings was at the lower end of priorities for the government in the 1970s when mining was commenced at Paguna in Papua New Guinea. In the 1980s however, disposal of tailings into the Yuba River became a critical issue with political implications (Auty, 1998). Because of increased awareness and concern for environmental ramifications of mining activities, the locals of the Paguna area possessed enough social and political power to demand an increment in their share of rent from the mining activity. This heightened sense of power, with its aftermath of violence lead to the death of several people and eventually to the closure of the Paguna mine.
According to Jenkins (2004), corporate organisations often indicate in their communications to be part of local communities. Most clashes between local communities and mining companies result from the fact that mining companies define community based on scientific and geographical facts whereas locals and indigenes define it on the bases of beliefs and perceptions; hence a clash of worldviews and scientific rationale ensues. Definitions of community cannot always be the bases of conflict between mining companies and local communities; other issues as job opportunities, and socio-cultural aspects of community relationships could also spark conflict. In essence, there are many factors that define conflicts between mining companies and local communities.

Papua New Guinea is not the only country with mining-related conflicts. Peru is perhaps the country with the most numerous cases of mining-related conflicts. Most mining-related conflicts in Peru are related to the Yanacocha mine, the second largest gold mine in the world. Since its commencement, the mine has been heavily criticised by both local groups and international advocate agencies for the environmental and socio-cultural impacts it has had in the region. The first wave of criticisms came almost immediately Minera Yanacocha, a subsidiary of Newmont Corporation which is one the largest gold mining companies in the world, won a bid to mine a concession in Cajamarca in Peru; and this criticism was on the basis of bribery of government officials by Newmont. In 2000 however, the spilling of 150kg of Mercury along a 43km road between 3 communities triggered a new wave of criticisms and protests between local communities, international advocate agencies on one hand, and Newmont Corporation on the other. Upon failure to reach an agreement for settlement of compensation from Newmont, the locals pledged to take the case up to Denver in the USA. Since then, several disputes have occurred and culminated into issues of violence; and in 2006, an environmental activist was fatally wounded by a gunshot after previously receiving a death threat (No Dirty Gold, 2007). Newmont Corporation has had many conflicts with local communities and other agencies in Peru, and in December 2011, it decided to halt construction of an open cast gold mine in northern Peru after days of protests by local communities and anti-mining agencies that lead to the injury of 10 protesters. These protests were based on the assumption that the mine will cause pollution and destroy water supplies. The company promised to resume discussions with local communities and government to reach a compromise before resuming construction on their Conga project on the eastern side of Cajamarca (BBC, 2011)

There are several other examples of mining-related conflicts in many other countries, but the central issue is that since mining has several environmental problems associated with it, local communities and environmental and human rights advocate agencies will most certainly protests against mining companies and their activities.

Analysing conflict in this manner probably does not depict or explain all the social aspects of natural resource management (NRM)-based conflicts. In this regard, it is essential to understand the issues that make it possible to analyse the direction of conflict; thus the possible improvement or deterioration of the situation. Studying the direction of conflict is preferred to the studying causes of the conflict which could be implausible. This is because identifying problems related to natural resources could have varied complications based on sources of information, values and worldviews (Buckles and Rusnak, 1999). In essence, analysing conflict on the basis of value structures, cultural issues and goal interference provides ideas about the status of conflict and provides little knowledge in understanding of constructivity or destructivity of a conflict situation. This is because they only touch on issues that provide just a description of incidents without touching on symbolic association and interaction and perspectives of the parties involved. The idea of making the distinction
between constructivity and destructivity can be put into a question that asks how a society like Ghana can discover constructive opportunities in a conflict situation. According to Hallgren (2003), any society that has sustainable development as one of their achievable goals, need a system for dealing with conflict in NRM-related issues. In the communicative aspect of natural resource management based conflict, it is essential to assess the platforms and structures in place to define conflict in constructive or destructive terms.

In an analogy, an Indonesian conflict could be used to infer to this NRM concept. Due to large revenues accrued by the autonomous Indonesian government, it made all possible efforts to subjugate local groups that tried to obstruct the operations of the Freeport Mine, and gave approvals for further expansion. While it did this, the government also intensified the environmental laws and auditing; and with mounting pressure from the government and other pressure groups, the mine commissioned an independent social audit and discovered that there was a misunderstanding between status of the local people, cultural value of land and decision-making approaches of the company. The commission eventually concluded that there was a need for improved co-ordination between the company, local communities and the government (Auty, 1998).

In this instance, the destructivity in the conflict stemmed from the position of the government in subjugating the activities of local pressure groups. The conclusion inherent within the social audit on the other hand indicates a possibility of provision of structures that would create opportunity for constructive conflict.

In understanding of issues of constructive and destructive conflict in natural resource management, it is essential to analyse a conflict situation using available texts and theories in Environmental Communication before making a possible conclusions about the costructivity or destructivity of conflicts. This paper uses symbolic interactionism as a theory to assess the perspectives of the different parties in order to analyse gold mining related conflicts in Ghana. Symbolic Interactionism is being used as the basis of explanation because the issues of disagreement are based on interpretation of actions (symbols) by the actors involved in such a conflict situation. It simply analyses how humans develop a set of symbols and ascribe meaning to it to explain their version of reality.

1.1 GHANA
Mining plays a vital role in Ghana’s economy; and between 2001 and 2004, the Ghana Minerals Commission indicates that the industry contributed approximately 5.2% of the nation’s gross domestic product (GDP) (Amponsah-Tawian and Darney-Baah, 2011). It also employs several thousand people in direct mining and mining-related services. After Ghana’s independence in 1957, most of its mining industry was nationalised to enhance centralised control. However, by the early 1980s, the country experienced a weakened economic system because of failing energy supplies, overvalues currency, high inflation rates, and foreign exchange shortages that culminated into lower productivity in the extraction and other production industries (Ibid). In the midst of economic stagnation, the government embarked on the Economic Recovery Program in 1983 and adopted reforms in the Structural Adjustment Program as per condition for loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (Country Studies Program, 2005). Through this, the World Bank and IMF believed that Ghana could increase its dependence on the extractive industry to support the weak economy (Owusu-Koranteng, 2010). The reforms included promotion and increasing the flow of foreign investment, rationalization of state-owned industries, reduction
of direct State intervention in the productive industry, rehabilitatating infrastructure and restoring incentives for the productive and extractive industries (Country Studies Program, 2005; Barwa, 1995). The mining sector has experienced a study growth since that period. As with the extraction industry in other parts of the world, the mining industry in Ghana has been subjected to several criticisms ranging from human rights, corporate social responsibility and environmental issues.

Prior to campaigns of pressure groups, most mining-related disputes were based on issues related to the land tenure system in Ghana. The system in Ghana allows for the collaborative ownership of land by both government and traditional authority; but the law also indicate that the president of the Republic reserves the right to acquire a piece of land and authorize its occupation for mineral interests within the time frame of enactment of the law (Ghana Minerals Act, 2006). This implies that within the framework of the law, upon discovery of a mineral in commercial quantities, the President or minister of state in charge of mining and minerals reserve the right to override the authority of traditional leaders to acquire the land for such purposes.

In recent times however, there has been enormous pressure on mining companies regarding social, economic and environmental issues related to their activities in Ghana. This paper examines some mining-related disputes and attempts to analyse the relationship amongst the parties involved. Figure 1 is a diagrammatic summary indicating the relationships amongst the parties; and the perception each party holds about the other parties. After an assessment of the relationships and perceptions amongst these actors are defined, an analysis will be made using theory to determine the constructive or destructive aspects of these two areas. The most important thing is to study and understand the level of communication and assess the nature of relationship that exists amongst these actors.

![Figure 1: relationships and perceptions of actors](image)

In this figure cordial relationship is defined using such attributes as trust, enhanced communication, and cooperation between actors. Strained relationship on the other hand depicts feelings of mistrust, antagonism and limited communication between actors. In studying the existing relationships amongst these actors, this paper will take into consideration of the communication channels, taking into consideration possibilities and
modes of transfer of information and feedback loops that enhance or inhibit communication. This can help with two things; determining the available channels of communication and also to study and determine the level of co-operation and understanding for assessment of level or state of dispute. The influential concept in this regard is communication because disagreements about legitimacy, decision making and right to influence are coordinated through communication.

In this regard, five major concepts are taken into consideration: constructivity, destructivity, trust, strained relationship and cordial relationship. The most important concepts for this paper are constructivity and destructivity, and they take their definitions based on interplay of factors surrounding actions, perspectives of actors, communication, trust, and the nature of relationship (cordial or strained).

1.2 Statement of the Problem
It is a well-known fact that mining pose several environmental and climatic ill effects; nonetheless, it is also an economically valuable industry for Ghana. The contentious issues that drive gold mining related conflicts in Ghana include land shortages, disruption of cultural and processes; and disruption and destruction of ecosystems and water bodies. These issues have created tensions between local communities, mining companies and the government. This is an extensive issue propagating through several mining areas in Ghana.

In 2005, Newmont Mining Corporation obtained government approval to commence operations on an open-pit cyanide processing concession in the Akyem area in the Eastern Region in Ghana. The proximity of this concession to the Ajenua-Bepo Forest Reserve has raised several controversies and protests by several groups and agencies in Ghana. The Akyem project made slow progress from its onset because of concerns raised by Ghana’s Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) after completion of its environmental impact assessment; and also from restrictions on projects in forest reserves by the International Finance Corporation (IFC). The first real issues of conflict broke out in 2005 when a shooting incident occurred between protesting youth and the police resulting in the death of some individuals.

As part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Wassa Association of Communities Affected by Mining (WACAM) and FoodFirst Information and Action Network (FIAN) International reported on the violations of human rights by large-scale mining companies in Ghana. Based on this report, the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights queried the Ghana government on Newmont’s operations. In March of 2009, FIAN developed the Global Campaign and Urgent Action on the open-pit gold mine in the Ajenua Bepo Forest Reserve by Newmont Akyem Project. The Urgent Action had details of potential violations on the social, cultural and economic rights of the people in the Akyem area, and this was sent to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food (GNA, 2009). This was in the form of intervention campaigns to create awareness in Europe and Ghana through speaker tours. In this way people who occupied influential positions were able to send letters to the ministry of mining and ministry of environment to urge for the cessation of mining activity in the Akyem area (Anane, 2012).

Upon this, a select group made of the Akyem Kotoku Paramouncy, chiefs and some elders within the Akyem Project area sent a signed communiqué to the UN Commissioner on Human Rights indicating that WACAM, FIAN and other anti-mining NGOs did not represent their interests; and that the interests of these NGOs undermined their communities’ socio-
economic development interests. The open letter also indicated that members of the Akyem area were in support of the mining initiative of Newmont, and trusted that Newmont will abide by national and international levels of environmental and social regulations. In response, WACAM indicated to the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre that the media attacks and the communiqué were instigated by Newmont Ghana Gold Limited (The Akyem Kotoku Paramouncy, et al., 2009).

In a separate report by the Financial Intelligence, Newmont allegedly paid a total of $42000 to some local chiefs to orchestrate the development of the communiqué that was sent to the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights (Financial Intelligence, 2011).

According to Darko and Keelson, in 2010 there was a standoff by the members of the New Abirem District. The contentious issue in this tension is the planned relocation of Yayaaso and seven other communities within the area of the Akyem project of Newmont. The people indicated the inadequacy of compensation from Newmont, and the fact that the mining will have adverse effects on heritage and archaeological resources including sacred sites and royal and public cemeteries (Darko and Keelson, 2010).

Ghana has many proven gold ore reserves; hence gold mining is an extensive activity in many parts of the country. In October of 2004, there was spillage of cyanide from one of the tailings dams of Golden Star Resources Limited (GSR) into the Aprepre River, which is a tributary of river Ankobra at Dumase in the Western Region in Ghana. This has created a new and intensified wave of tension between local communities and some NGOs on one side, and GSR on the other. These NGOs including WACAM, FIAN and Oxfam have expressed their disappointment in GSR their operations and treatment of the communities within the areas of their concession (Earthworks et al, 2006).

In August 2005, the Prestea Concerned Citizens Association released a press statement indicating their perception of the social, environmental and human rights problems associated with the operations of GSR. According to this group, GSR’s insensitivity to the problems its causing Himan, Dumase and Prestea would lead to the eventual death of these towns. In their view, the mining activity is encroaching on the towns and destroying water bodies, farms and other properties. They also indicated that attention on artisanal miners must be directed towards GSR because it is GSR has the most significant impact on their lives, and urged the government of Ghana to intervene on their behalf due to the fact that their grievances to GSR have been ignored (Press Release, 2005).

In 2006, Earthworks, FIAN, Oxfam and WACAM urged the International Cyanide Management Institute to audit Golden Star Resources’s mine at Prestea in Ghana. This was after a reported leakage of cyanide from one of their tailings into the Ajoo stream which is a tributary of the Aprepre River, which had been previously been the subject of cyanide spillage in 2004 (Libération Afrique, 2006).

In much recent times, there have been renewed controversies between GSR and some local communities. The Divisional Chief of Himan-Prestea, Nana Ntebo Pra IV in October 2011, called for a review of the mining law in Ghana to cater for the needs of local communities. In his view, mining communities endure the effects of mining activities but are lower on priorities in terms of expenditure on revenues from mining (GNA, 2011).

In December 2011, about 200 women in the Dumase community held a three-day peaceful demonstration to protest the unreliability of the water supply by GSR. They demanded a reliable and sustainable water supply for the community since their main supply of water
(Aprepre River) had been heavily polluted with cyanide and heavy metals from the mining activity of the company. In response to this agitation, GSR indicated that they experienced some technical hitches with the water pumps, hence their inability to supply water for four days (Smith-Asante 2012).

In 2011, the mining sector contributed about 40% of merchandised exports in Ghana, and by 2016, the industry is expected to be worth about $1.86bn (Ghana Business News 2012, Ghana News Agency 2012). Ghana has also commenced extraction and production of oil. Oil can also be described as a mining activity since it involves drilling. With the expected growth in the overall mining industry, one can also expect an increase in the number and intensity of issues surrounding the mining industry.

The scenarios described above are a few instances of mining related issues in the country. One has to take into account the extensive nature of mining in Ghana to understand the gravity of a culmination of these issues. The idea for this paper is to educate people for them to take lessons from past experiences for prevention and/or rectification of future occurrences. It is important for a nation like Ghana to study the issues that have occurred in the metal-mining industry to prevent similar issues and problems from transgressing into the newly-commenced oil industry. The underlying issue is embedded in relationships that lead to conflict situations in Ghana in terms of mining. With Ghana aiming to achieve middle-income nation status by 2015, it is imperative that it engages and rectify social problems that are related to the mining industry in order to not undermine or hinder this goal. Thus the underlying problem can be put into a question that asks how a society like Ghana can discover constructive opportunities in a conflict situation.

1.3 Objectives

- To examine the perceptions and relationship among the actors in conflict
- To determine the channels available for communication between actors
- To determine the social and political structures in place to enhance the constructivity or destructivity of these conflicts
2 METHODOLOGY

The research was based on qualitative approach with emphasis on conflict situations in the Akyem and Wassa areas in the Eastern and Western regions respectively in Ghana. The general idea is to investigate mining-related conflict situations in Ghana to determine whether they are of a constructive or destructive nature. These areas were selected because issues in these areas have gained popularity in community sustainability concerns; and also because it is practically impossible within the time frame to investigate all conflict situations in mining communities in the entirety of Ghana. The study was based on information obtained from interviews and literature sources without a personal visit to the field.

2.1 Data Collection

For data collection and analysis, semi-structured interviews and questionnaire were used as information sources from selected respondents. There were also selected literatures used as both primary and secondary data sources.

2.1.1 Semi-structured Interviews and Questionnaires

This technique was adopted because it allows the interviewer to follow up on questions that seem pertinent for the topic being investigated. The questions asked were based on knowledge from existing literatures and also from information providing during the interview process. These interviews were conducted through Skype. The interviews run from early September to November of 2012. The interviewees range from community elders to company representatives. In the Akyem area, six interviews were conducted and the interviewees included the Chief and Queen of Yayaaso, the chairman of the Unity Committee, community elders and opinion leaders from Abirem and Yayaaso, and five community members who were randomly selected. The first interview took the form of a group discussion involving the Chief and Queen of Yayaaso together with the other leaders of committees and opinion leaders. This lasted approximately one hour. The five other interviews included the members of the Akyem communities and these interviews were conducted in durations lasting between twelve and seventeen minutes.

In the Wassa area, the interviewees included a former assembly woman, a member of the Representative Committee, two opinion leaders and four community members randomly selected. A Skype interview was also conducted for the representative of FIAN Ghana and Newmont Ghana Limited. The duration for these however lasted between fourteen and eighteen minutes.

Structured questionnaires were also prepared for responses from Newmont Ghana Limited and Golden Star Resources.

2.1.2 Documents

For purposes of identifying issues related to conflicts in these areas, several documents were used as primary sources. These included press statements, letters, company reports and aspects of the constitution of Ghana.

2.2 Data Analysis

For data analysis, the answered questionnaire and recorded responses from the Skype interviews were transcribed and discussed by segmenting and analysing them based on the objectives stated above. It was based on discussions on communication channels and social and political structures in place for dealing with such conflicts. Theories in Environmental Communication including Symbolic Interactionism, deliberative democracy and Jürgen
Habermas’ theory of communicative action have been combined with Chantal Mouffe’s critique of Habermas, agonistic pluralism to analyse these scenarios to understand the constructive and destructive trends of the disagreements. Amongst other concepts as critical theory and social pragmatism, communicative action also builds on symbolic interactionism; and in this paper, it helps to categorize different kinds of social action by investigating specific actions whiles focusing on their validity claims. Validity claims and counter validity claims help to promote rationality and ability of a group to reach understanding.

This discussion section of the paper only looks to analyse the issues based on politic and power relations, and also on the connection between the theories and the situation as described by the available information from both interview and news sources. The conclusion of this paper however makes clear indications as to which issues and areas exhibit constructive and/or destructive potentials.

2.3 Defining Strained and Cordial Relationships
For evaluation of relationships and extent of disagreement amongst the parties, strained and cordial relationships are used as determining factors. For a relationship to be cordial there must be such attributes as trust, enhanced communication, and cooperation between actors. In this sense trust refers to the belief of positive trend in the social interaction between two or more actors. A cordial relationship would thus promote the creation of arenas that would tolerate resonate perspectives of the different actors. Strained relationship on the other hand depicts feelings of mistrust, antagonism and limited communication between actors. A strained relationship would inhibit the ability of actors to understand and accept the perspectives of other actors, and makes it difficult to promote a positive form of interaction amongst them.

2.4 Limitations
There were several limitations that faced this study: firstly, there was the unavailability of funds and thus the inability to go to the field to obtain firsthand information. There were also response issues from respondents as many emails and phone calls were not returned. Several emails sent to WACAM and some of the government agencies were not responded to. These could possibly provide lapses especially in the area of analyses of perspectives amongst the actors involved in these two areas.
3 THEORY

A simplified definition of conflict as it relates to natural resources is a social interaction with diminished trust and interaction between the actors (Hallgren 2003). In conflict situations involving natural resources, when there is divergence or incompatibility of perspectives or goals amongst actors because of perceived influence of one of the parties in the political, legal or social realm, several scenarios ranging from constructive dialogue to direct violence can occur (Ångman, 2012). In order to analyse a situation, it is imperative to understand the culminating factors that make people act in a particular way; and it is possible to do this by focusing on social interaction, human thinking and the consequences of actions. This paper examines constructivity and destructivity of conflicts related to natural resource management. It therefore adopts approaches in Symbolic Interactionism to examine how the different actors perceive the actions of the other actors. This paper also makes use theories in Environmental Communication such as Communicative Action, deliberative democracy, and Chantal Mouffe’s agonistic pluralism to further explain factual and inherent issues within the purview of the discussion. As explained in the first chapter of this paper constructivity emphasizes social interactions which contribute to increased understanding of perspectives, goals, concerns, values, estimations, assumptions and emotions amongst parties involved whiles destructivity puts emphasis on social interactions which conduces actors to diminish their understanding of each others’ perspectives and concerns.

![Figure 2: understanding dynamics of relationships and communication](image)

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the existing relationships amongst the parties listed in figure 2 by studying the dynamics of their perspectives and communication. Symbolic Interactionism and Communicative Action are essential in understanding the constructive or destructive potential of these conflict situations because whiles Symbolic Interactionism attempts to explain the action of one party using the perspectives of the other party, communicative action helps to understand the possibilities of achieving the cooperatively pursued goal of reaching understanding amongst parties involved in such conflict situations. The other theories of deliberative democracy and agonistic pluralism build upon the strengths inherent in communicative action.
This section elaborates further on these concepts and how they fit together in an analytical framework, to be used when analyzing conflicts about gold mining.

### 3.1 Symbolic Interactionism

The theory of Symbolic Interactionism is enshrouded in the idea of perspectives. To understand the concept, one needs an understanding of the fundamental assumptions. The first assumption is that the action of humans towards an object or situation is based on the meaning they have for them. The second assumption is that these attached meanings are developed through interaction with other humans. Societies are formed and altered because of the gregarious nature of the human being. Humans act based on the actions of the action of other individuals and this helps to shape a unique identity for the individual and the larger group (Charon 2009). The third assumption is that these meanings are interpreted by the individual who has come across the object or situation (Blumer, 1969). The meaning of an object is not defined based on the psychological analysis of the object by the individual, but rather on the interaction with other people and studying how they react towards the individual in relation to the object or situation. In essence, Symbolic Interactionism emphasize that how an individual defines an object or situation is based on social interaction with other individuals and through the process of interpretation of the individual.

When people encounter a situation, they act based on what they have noticed, how they interpret it, and the line of action they choose based on this interpretation (Blumer, 1969). The meanings people attach to an object is defines how they perceive the object. Charon (2009) defines perspective as a conceptual framework that emphasizes the interrelated words that are used to order physical reality. In essence, it is an angle from which an individual views reality. What is worth noting here is the use of word “angle”; because this is where individual develops their version of the real situation. People cannot totally agree on what a single object is because they are unable to see outside their perspectives. Charon (2009) indicates that viewing an object through a single perspective might prove inaccurate because perspectives are biased views of reality and are also based on value judgements, social structure and interaction, and individual interpretation.

Freedom arise within a society when an individual or group refuse to give allegiance or conform to a generalized idea, and possess the abstract, socially understood and intentional tools to behave in contrast to the normative pattern based on the differences in perspectives. It becomes a disagreement or conflict situation when there is a counter reaction from other individuals, a group, or general others that constitute the society (Charon, 2009).

### 3.2 Communicative Action

Democracy and public participation make up the core of this model. In making sense of this model, it is essential to understand the concept of Social Action which has communicative action as an intricate part. According to Habermas, human beings within societies exhibit four different kinds of actions; teleological action, normatively regulated action, dramaturgical action, and communicative action (Bolton, 2005). With teleological action, when an actor is confronted with a situation, the actor seeks an objective, and makes a decision on possible courses of action and guidelines upon which to act, and thus act on those alternatives with the view of achieving those preconceived goals (Habermas, 1984). In normatively regulated
action, when actors within a society are confronted with a situation, they act according to the values and norms within the group. It involves the collective action of a group as a whole and not on the actions of individual members. This form of action could be spontaneous and deemed an appropriate response to the situation by the group (Bolton, 2005). In dramaturgical action, the individual is neither a solitary actor nor member of a group, but rather acts based on how the individual wishes to be perceived by the public. In this sense, the action might not be spontaneous but based on the audience of the actor. (TCA 1, p. 86).

Habermas’ theory of Communicative Action is based on the idea that discussion of issues about the public must involve a section of the public directly or indirectly affected by the situation in question. By interacting with each other parties are able to raise validity claims that are subject to acceptance or contestation (TCA1, p. 99). In communicative action, the objective of actors or parties in a situation is to find possible means to reach a common understanding and coordination of actions. This is achieved by applying such actions as reasoned arguments and consensus instead of relying on strategic action that suit best in the attainment of their individual objectives (Bolton, 2005). Instead of viewing communicative action as an intricate concept, Habermas simplifies it as an individual action aimed at enhancing cooperation and common understanding by giving the wider public an increasing role in discussions and decision-making instead of reliance on opinions of privileged experts and bureaucrats.

Linguistics and language play vital roles in communicative action. Habermas indicates the importance of language in communication because its interpretation promotes continuity of the communication process. Even with much emphasis on the importance of language, communicative action is also asserted to involve other attributes of communication. Habermas iterates that the model of communicative action must not be equated with communication because even though language plays an important role, actors in coming to an understanding also coordinate their actions in pursuit of their individual objectives (TCA 1 p. 101).

3.3 Deliberative Democracy

Habermas (1996) in discussing democratic politics indicates that social power is the normative form of power in which the seemingly superior interests of elite and the privileged are pursued using administrative power which is justified in the context the prevailing social context of rationality. In essence, the individual interests of such elite citizens are the motivating factor in their decisions that are made in the socially legitimate and representative system. In his view, legitimacy is only a measure of stability within a state using a measure of the toleration levels of those who are governed. He indicates that the use of “legitimacy” in the context of politics and democracy defeats the purpose of democracy because it could also purport that dictatorship can be considered legitimate as long as the recognized framework for governance remains stable. This eliminates the idea of rationality in dealing with decision-making processes in the essence that rationality is a practical ethic that by which ordinary people orient themselves to life (Elliot, 2010). Decisions in the modern political system are not rationally justified; rather, they are expressions that are shaped by attributes of the dominating cultures. The prevailing idea is that democracy must be enhanced using the perspectives of the governed (Habermas, 1996). This is because authority and the exercise of power should emanate from decisions collectively made those who are governed. It involves collective decision making by members of the citizenry who are directly or indirectly affected
the situation upon which a decision is being made by their representatives. The idea of deliberative democracy is based on a framework that promotes free discussion among equal citizens. These discussions involve the use of reasoning and argumentation. The use of reason promotes dispassionate and impartial opinions whereas argumentation which is related to reasoning has the tendency to be impartial to values. The fundamental idea is in the premise that collective political power is based on equal reasoning capabilities (Cohen, 1997; Elster, 1998). This reduces the hegemonic nature of power distribution and focuses on a form of shared version of power with much emphasis on equality.

According to Mouffe (2000), the essential thing to do is not to eliminate this hegemonic power, but to encompass them rather in a form that is in simpatico with shared democratic values existent in social dispensations. She makes use of four contexts namely the political, politics, antagonism and agonism to finally end up with agonistic pluralism. The political is the deep-seated ill-will that defines the relationships amongst different parties in a political system which is also defined as the attributes that allow for the antagonism amongst these actors. Conflict situations can be viewed as positive instruments for change; thus the important thing is not to totally eradicate conflicting positions of actors, but to enhance a system that would allow opponents in such a scenario to view each other as adversaries and not enemies. This sums up the idea of agonistic pluralism which seeks to transform antagonistic situations into agonistic ones.

This paper has adopted the definition of conflict as attributes and consequences of social interaction. In converging the story for this paper, and the theories described I above into the constructive and destructive concepts, it is important to indicate how it will be done. In the first instance, constructivity and destructivity make use of “social interaction” in their definitions, and this makes it imperative to analyse interactions using a theory that best defines and describes how people interact and perceive each other. For this paper, Symbolic Interactionism is used to analyse the perspectives of the different actors involved in these conflicts. From this analysis, the paper then makes an inference on the kind of relationships that exist between the parties and the extent of dispute. This is the point where the paper makes use of cordial and strained relationships. Trust, being an important aspect of constructivity and destructivity is also analysed based on the perspectives of the parties.

According to Hallgren (2003), any society aiming to achieve sustainability must have a system that deals with conflict. In essence, conflict must be managed in a way that would not distort or deteriorate the existing values and strengths of a society. The question is then asked as to how to approach this afore mentioned management. Hallgren (2003) also indicate that deliberation is essential for managing conflicts that are related to management of natural resources. This is the point where Habermas’ Communicative Action and Deliberative Democracy, and Mouffe’s Agonistic Pluralism, and power relations become necessary assets that can be used to achieve or maintain sustainability.
4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Politics and Policy
In cases of natural resources and especially the extractive industry, issues in communication and constructivity have to include analysis of policy instruments and initiatives, because for any mining company to commence operation in Ghana, it has to do so within the confines of the law. It is thus essential to take into account the policy that guides the extraction industry in Ghana. For this paper, some aspects of the law including land acquisition, power and polity issues and resolution of possible conflicts will be discussed as an analysis of the role of politics and policy in mining.

With the Structural Adjustment Program in the 1980s, the government of Ghana developed the first mining-specific legislation, which is the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) Law 153 as a provisional law to provide a stable policy environment in the country and also to attract mining companies (Rutherford and Ofori-Mensah, 2011; Owusu-Koranteng, 2010). This law was enacted to focus on promotion of direct foreign investment for the mining sector. With this law, there wasn’t much emphasis on social issues that are related to mining because the government’s desire and attention on revamping the economy. The PNDC Law 153 was later revised in 2006 to become Act 703, the Minerals and Mining Act 2006. The new law however also remains focused on promotion of investment in the mining sector. This has proved unacceptable to several advocate agencies because it was expected that with the new law, focus would also be placed on social issues that could arise as a result of mining activity (Rutherford and Ofori-Mensah, 2011; Owusu-Koranteng, 2010).

The first of such issues is in relation to the land tenure system in Ghana. Under the existing tenure system, land ownership takes four forms: State/Public lands, vested lands, customary lands and private lands. Public lands are those acquired and owned by the government. All public lands in the country are vested in the President of the nation, on behalf of, and also in trust for the people of Ghana. All customary lands are vested in the appropriate stool on behalf of, and in trust for the subjects of that stool (Constitution of Ghana.). For purposes of this paper, State and customary (stool, clan or family) lands are of prime importance. The ownership of these lands is based on an absolute allodial titles (the Ghana Land Bank Directory). It is important to note that customary lands constitute about 78% of all lands in Ghana whereas State-owned lands constitute just 20% with the remaining 2% going to private lands and reserves (Ministry of Lands, Forestry and Mines, 2008).

Contentious issues arise in cases where there exist lands laden with mineral resources. This is because the Ghana Minerals Act 2006 indicates that “where land is required to secure the development or utilization of a mineral resource, the President may acquire the land or authorize its occupation and use under an applicable enactment for the time being in force.” In essence, even though a piece of land could be owned by a stool or clan, mineral content within the land is owned by the State. The government therefore reserves the right to compulsorily acquire the land for purposes of mining in the case of discovery of mineral in commercial quantity. This law however gives room for compensation by indicating that in case of compulsory acquisition of land property, prompt of fair and adequate compensation shall be made. This is because even though there are customary and private lands in Ghana, it is guided by a cadastral system that has the Ghana Lands Commission as the body that takes responsibility for sale and acquisition that are not based on compulsory acquisition by the government. With this system, the customary authority is entitled to 22% of revenues from sale of land. What makes this issue more interesting for this paper is that with compulsory acquisition it is possible to receive less than the 22% that they are normally entitled to.
According to Larbi (2009), the compulsory acquisition and the formula used to calculate their due compensation is a problem for many traditional authorities who have expressed their resentment. This is because of the inadequacy of the compensation they receive and also the fact that the issue of compulsory acquisition challenges their authority. For individual farmers the story is different as compensation for displacement is based not on the value of the land, but on the perceived value of crops on farms.

Another issue that can determine the direction of conflict is mining areas in Ghana relates to the privileges enjoyed and power exercised by mining companies. Under the Water Rights section of the Minerals Act 2006, the holder of mineral rights for mineral operations reserves the right to obtain, divert, impound, convey and use water from any water body within the area of the mining right. According to Owusu-Koranteng (2008), this has created many issues in the Prestea area because it paved the way for Golden Star Resources (GSR) to use the Aprepre River which is now heavily polluted with cyanide and other heavy metals. Because of pollution of the main sources of water in the area, GSR supplies the town with water through water tankers, but there have been several and persistent protests among community members on the inadequacy of supply. WACAM as an advocate agency has raised awareness on several occasions on the state of water bodies in the Wassa area in the Western Region on Ghana and has also expressed their dismay as to the persistent pollution problem because the section 18 of the Minerals Act indicate that the holder of mineral rights shall comply with relevant regulations made for the protection of the environment if the right relates to the exploitation of minerals. Some of the respondents from the interview have also indicated that there have been several protests regarding water shortages because of the ineffectiveness of the water supply system. In their view, people are frustrated with the recent development and that there are rumours that some people are willing and ready to take drastic measures against GSR in the Dumase and Prestea areas. In the Akyem area, Newmont supplies the communities with water in water tankers as well, but unlike the case of Prestea, there were no complains as to the adequacy of the supply.

The law makes provision for those who lose their lands in situations of mining by indicating that the holder of the mineral rights has the responsibility of allocating alternative lands for those who are displaced (Ghana Minerals Act, 2006). In the Akyem area, some of the displaced farmers have been able to acquire pieces of land, with a few yet to receive their alternative lands for their farming activities. In separate incident in the Western Region in Ghana, the people of Teberebe have been infuriated by the activities of the mining company Anglgold Ashanti because their farmlands have been taken from them without adequate compensation and those who have been allocated alternative farms claim that they have to cover great distances in order to get to their farms. This line of story is prevalent in many mining communities in Ghana, as noted by one of the interviewees. Mike Anane of FIAN has indicated that the issue of land is very serious in Ghana. He indicated that FIAN has received several complaints from farmers in mining communities regarding the meager compensation they are given and the disregard some of the mining companies have shown to them and the Ghana law by ignoring their need for alternative lands for farming.

The other important issue in determining the direction of conflict situations has to do with policy instruments that are responsible for resolution of disputes. Section 27 under the Minerals Act 2006 deals with dispute resolution, but what is most interesting for this paper is the exclusion of guidelines for resolution of any dispute that might arise between local communities and mining companies. There are five subsections under Dispute Resolution in the Act, but they all deal with instances of disputes between the holder of the mineral rights (mining company) and the Republic (i.e. the government). WACAM has expressed its
concern on this issue because in their view, it gives the mining companies extra power in dealing with issues of local communities. The Act indicates an intervention only in incidents regarding the provision or lack of provision of compensation. Even though the law does not indicate possibilities for dispute resolution on incidents other that compensation, has community liaison officers who go into the Dumase, Prestea and Himan areas to inquire about their problems and needs, but in the end, nothing really gets done further increasing the tension between the company and these communities (Anane, 2012-interview).

The issue of politics and policy instruments must not only involve the government of Ghana. There are a number of guidelines set by several institutions for multinationals in the extractive industry that must be complied to. Even though conflict situations are always present and foreseeable, they are also possibly avoidable or minimized (Kemp and Gotzman, 2008). Kemp and Gotzman (2008) advocate for the implementation of proper and legal grievance mechanisms for local communities in the extractive industry. While conflict situations are inevitable, it is better to put in place such mechanisms because community grievances are mostly ambiguous and overlapping. Since countries within which multinational extractive corporations operate usually have weaker policies, it is essential that their parent countries put in place mechanisms that would prevent the escalation of conflict. In a positive attempt of this notion, the Australian government passed a motion which encourages all Australian firms operating in foreign countries to develop rights-complaint grievance mechanisms that can be monitored and audited by the government. Even though these are positive steps in dealing with conflict situations, it is yet to be transformed into legislation (Kemp and Gotzman, 2008). Mining companies must be encouraged to adhere to other international guidelines such as the International Finance Corporation’s (IFC) Performance Standard on Social and Environmental Sustainability which indicate that upon anticipation of adverse effects on indigenous communities, the company should establish grievance mechanisms to receive and facilitate resolution of concerns and complaints on environmental and social performance of companies (IFC, 2009). Such actions would help reduce the social impacts of mining activities on local communities and in essence help to reduce conflict tendencies between communities and mining companies (Owusu-Koranteng, 2008).

In June 2012, Act 703, Ghana Minerals Act was reviewed and revised to attempt an elimination of nuisances in the industry. This included aspects that deal with mineral rights and false documentation, mineral property and rights, and the issue of illegal mining (GNA, 2012). The problem with this new regulation is that it focused on mining in river bodies and activity of foreign nationals engaged in mining, and didn’t include regulation and settlement of disputes between mining companies and their host communities. Without appropriate guidelines, there would not be proper guidelines that allows for participation and deliberation, and if not backed by actions, continued deliberations will lead to the eventual destructive nature of such disputes.

Since the policies in Ghana regarding social responsibilities of mining companies are vague, WACAM has called the Canadian and American governments to put in place mechanisms that would require and Newmont to comply with the Organization for Economic Cooperation’s (OECD) Principles for Multinational Organisations which requires that companies operating outside their home countries should use the same standards used in their home countries (Owusu-Koranteng, 2008).
4.2 Power and power relations
Having discussed the role of politics and policy instruments, it is essential to look into issues that are related to power and the exercise of power. In the previous section, this paper delved into the mineral aspect of the land tenure system in Ghana and how many groups and individuals have aired their dissatisfaction with the legislation in this regard. This law seems to reduce the power or legitimacy of traditional authorities, and in a society like Ghana which has been shaped by the help of these institutions, it raises two questions that will hence be discussed. The first has to do with the reduction in possible revenues that could be accrued from the sale or lease of a land asset to the traditional authority as an institution, and to development aspirations of the authority. The second issue is that most chiefs, especially in the Wassa area have expressed dissatisfaction with recent occurrences that undermine their authority; and there have been news reports of some chiefs making complaints that maintaining the chieftaincy system in Ghana is pointless if the authorities of the chiefs are undermined by the modern democratic bureaucracies and corporate entities.

The scenario described above is based on the perspectives of chiefs, who occupy privileged positions in society. It is worth noting that the political system in modern Ghana has successfully incorporated the traditional chieftaincy system into the modern democratic system. It is essential that a certain misconception about the traditional system is corrected before discussing its relevance in the section of the paper. With the absence of documentation, many people have been made to believe that a democratic system is practically non-existent in traditional systems in Ghana. In traditional system as practiced in the pre-colonial period included aspects of consultation and popular consensus before making public announcements of making orders in the name of the king (IEA, 2010). On the other hand, modern democratic system as practiced in Ghana is based on representation. Whoever exercises the rights of an individual on the person’s behalf has been given that mandate through the individual’s vote. Once the person’s sovereignty is surrendered through voting, the representative becomes accountable to the individual by the power of the vote (Forson – myjoyonline, 2013). The constitution in Ghana indicates that power resides in the people; and that power is derived from the mandate given to their representatives who are essentially the parliamentarians (ibid).

It has been emphasized that Habermas’ theory of Communicative Action is based on the idea that discussion of issues about the public must involve a section of the public directly or indirectly affected by the situation in question. By interacting with each other parties are able to raise validity claims that are subject to acceptance or contestation (TCA1, p. 99). By similar principles, deliberative democracy emphasizes that authority and the exercise of power should emanate from perspectives and decisions collectively made those who are governed (Habermas, 1996). In principle, both concepts seek to reduce the power and legitimacy of the pyramidal and bureaucratic system of modern democratic systems in favour of a rather lateral kind of power that seeks to give an ear and power to the perspectives of those who are governed.

Since traditional authority and modern democratic representative authority possess similar traits, they fail to provide a system that allows for the collective decision making by the
masses. This is because the seemingly superior interests of the elite and privileged are pursued using administrative power whiles the perspectives and interests of the governed are neglected. This is evident in the situation in Ghana; because in the Akyem area, there have been claims by the interviewees and on news reports that the chiefs have sought after their interests and taken bribes from Newmont and essentially neglecting the needs of their subjects. The minister of state in charge of mining indicates that Newmont has done well in fulfilling its corporate social responsibility. He also indicates that some of the demands of local communities of Newmont's concession areas are beyond the reach of the company (Fordjuor, 2012). A statement made by the Member of Parliament for the Obuasi area in the Ashanti Region reiterated the statement made by the minister; by indicating that AngloGold Ashanti as a company did not deserve the treatment of certain NGOs including WACAM (GNA, 2011). The claim of some of the interviewees is that after they take office, the ministers and members of parliament forget what got them into office (i.e. the vote of the people), and look only after their personal and sometimes selfish needs. In essence, the general perspective in both areas is that their representatives have failed to provide acceptable representation practices for those they represent.

4.3 Perspectives and Relationships

One of the main issues that aid conflict is that people are either unable or unwilling to view issues from outside their perspective. For the symbolic interactionist, this is a normal phenomenon because each perspective in itself is an intended approach to describe what makes sense to the bearer of that perspective. Charon (2009) indicates that perspectives are only a set of words used to describe reality. These are words that people use to describe what makes sense to them in any situation. Conflict situations can be described by the use of interests and perspectives of actors (Ångman, 2012). These perspectives may be the result of interest or goals of the actor who can alienate himself from the views of other actors. Perspectives are useful in understanding conflict situations because each perspective provides more information and sheds more light on different aspects of human attitudes and behaviors. What is most important to note is that no matter how important or valid a perspective is, it can never describe all scenarios of a situation because they are biased and tend to ignore some aspects whiles overemphasizing other aspects of the situation (Charon, 2009). In a typical example, mining communities have perspectives focuses on issues that border on their livelihood; mining companies on the other hand have theirs focused on minerals and profit maximization; NGOs and ENGOs have theirs bordering on the environmental and social issues that result from mining activity.

The issues that take focus in this paper are those that arise from the Akyem and Wassa areas in the Eastern and Western regions of Ghana. It is therefore appropriate to study both situations independently to understand the relationships amongst the actors involved. Most conflict situations are between mining companies and local communities, but on several occasions, there are some NGOs and ENGOs that play vital roles in these issues. Other parties are also important in this case because they play important roles in the lives of people in these communities; and these include the government, community leadership and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
Even though most perspectives are biased and do not provide a full description of a situation, there is some form of reality called objective reality which describes the situation as it exists (Charon, 2009). Perspectives are also descriptions of symbols which are socially created object that have come into existence through social interaction. These objects are modified into three forms: physical (e.g. building), social (e.g. sibling), and abstract (e.g. nature of a relationship) (Elliot, 2010). The perspectives of the actors in these two areas will be analysed based on these objectives. Through careful observation, objectivity and recognition of possible errors, analyzing these fundamental object groups will provide good standards for judging the perspectives of the different actors (Charon, 2009). For purposes of this paper however, the abstract object takes prominence because it deals with relationships. Based on information I gathered through the interviews and other information sources, I will assess the perspectives of the different actors in order to make a possible definition of the relationship as indicated by Figure 1 (relationships and perceptions of actors).

4.3.1 Akyem Area

The communities in this area are predominantly farming communities; hence, they rely of farming as a source of their livelihood. In the initial stages, when they were made aware of the proposed mine and the effect it would have on their lives, they protested. These protests took place in 2005 and 2006 when they organized processions to provide petitions to the government through the Member of Parliament for the area. When the government and Newmont made them aware of the benefits that would come unto their communities, the perspectives of some community members on the issue was changed. This fact was made evident when the interviewees admitted that this view was not shared by all members of the seven communities affected by the mine. According to the chief of Abirem, Newmont Ghana Gold Limited is one of the few mining companies in Ghana that have good reputation and that Ghana as a country must be proud of such a company (NGO news Africa, 2009). In essence, the people in the Akyem communities believe that the mining activity and the Newmont would bring economic development to the area. When asked about news of incidents of standoffs between the communities and Newmont, the chief of Yayaaso responded by indicating that most of the news reports were misconceptions.

“There were media reports suggesting that Newmont was taking our community for granted and harassing the community members with their security forces; When the media hears of some issues and come to investigate, they do realize that it is usually not the same but a different matter. The reports were that we were being resettled in an old cemetery, but upon investigations, they realized that it was a false propagation. The issue is that the mining activity affected our community, so upon suggestion from the EPA, we were relocated without any complaints from us.” (Nana Adarkwa, Chief of Yayaaso)

Nana Adarkwa also indicated that this view is however not shared by all members of the community. According to him, there are some people who appear to be conservative and would like have preferred to have stayed back in the old settlement because those areas has helped define their cultural identity. This is an important point because even though there are shared perspectives that can prevail in a particular society, there are always individuals who have separate perspectives based on their preferences and interests.
With regards to the government, the opinions somehow differ from that of Newmont. They have a collective opinion about the government. In their view, “the government has turned a deaf ear and a blind eye to their needs” as they indicated during the interview process for this paper. Even though the leadership of the Akyem communities maintain a genial relationship with Newmont, they also indicate that they have other mining-related issues that need to be dealt with, but all their pleas to the government has proved to be futile and that the government has left them to deal with such a big corporation on issues that requires the assistance of the government. This paper deals with the issue of trust and this is a clear indicator of reduced trust these people have in the government. Hallgren (2003) has indicated that the destructive nature of conflict is borne partly by the issue of mistrust. By indicating that the government has turned a blind eye on their problems, it could be interoperated that the leaders of these communities have little trust in the government in two aspects. The first is the low level of trust in the interaction that exists between these communities and the government, implying that they do not appreciate the communication that exists between the communities and the government. In essence, they possible for them to have belief in the messages of hope that were given to them by the government in the initial stages, but they could also doubt if there would be positive and progressive interaction and intervention by the government. On the other hand, the low level of trust could be implied to be the belief in the incompetences in the government machinery when it comes to issues regarding mining communities as has been documented in news reports on existing issues in other parts of Ghana in recent years. Trust plays a vital role in issues of destructivity, and since destructivity of conflict involves diminishing understanding of perspectives, the lack of trust could inhibit the understanding these local have for the political perspective of the government. This could further complicate the issue and raise the tension that exists between the local people and the government which might eventually transgress to other actors and parties in the area. Since the mining activity in this area is still in its infancy, it is important to maintain trust, especially between the government and the local people.

In the issue of their opinions on NGOs such as WACAM and FIAN, the interviewees indicated that these agencies sometimes tend to exaggerate issues and problems because of their fundamental aim which they understood to be the protection of the Ajenjua Bepo Forest Reserve. As long as the activities of these agencies do not contradict with their aspiration of economic development, they would have no problems with them. But they also indicated that they still need these agencies because in many occasions, their work helps them in catalyzing their complaints and some of the social projects of the mine in their communities. Hallgren (2003) indicates that interests and goal interference are intricate issues embedded in conflict situations. Information provided in the interview suggest that there are no existing qualms between FIAN and WACAM, and the local communities, but the interviewees’ expression that it is possible to have complications with these NGOs is an indication that goal interference would not be tolerated, at least by the leadership of these communities.

As indicated above, perspectives are always different; no two perspectives are the same. I was able to interview a few locals to learn about their views on issues bordering on Newmont and mining. In their view, the mining activity will eventually deprive them of their source of income, and that some of their elder community members and some chiefs have taken money as bribes from Newmont for lands that belong to them. They claim that Newmont has deceived them by making promises they never intended on keeping. They also put a lot of blame on the government for not helping them in the treatment of Newmont on the Akyem communities. One of the respondents indicated that Newmont is taking advantage of them because in his view, “the company would not be able to treat people like way they do if it was
operating in a foreign advanced country”. This further raises the issue of mistrust the people have in the government. As discussed in the politics section of this paper, it is vital that that government regulation and grievance mechanisms that can deal with community-company relations.

The information gathered to represent the government’s perspective is based on information from media sources and not from interviews or answered questionnaires. According to one minister of state, Newmont has done well in fulfilling its corporate social responsibility. He indicates that some of the demands of local communities of Newmont's concession areas are beyond the reach of the company. He cited that some communities have the belief that Newmont is not treating them well and make demands of things they feel they are entitled to from the company. (Joy FM news, 2012). There are two possible interpretations of this statement. The first is that the minister is making an attempt to legitimize the presence and activities of Newmont whiles reducing the legitimacy of the claims of local communities. The other possible explanation is that the minister is attempting to educate the local communities through the media on the limits of legal responsibilities of mining companies. There is minimal developmental projects established in mining communities in Ghana, therefore many mining communities have the perception that since the mining activity is allegedly supposed to bring socio-economic development, it is the duty of mining companies to fulfill these aspirations. Mining companies have also stressed that major developmental projects are supposed to be established by the government who receive royalties from these multinationals.

The Wassa Association of Communities Affected by Mining (WACAM) has always taken issue with Newmont on their belief of the negative impact of their activity on the physical environment and the social implication of their activities on the Akyem communities. Wacam has indicated that in addition to the destruction of the Ajenua reserve, the company is using illegal means of force and intimidation to acquire pieces of lands from farmers without due compensation. They indicate the unfortunate positions the mining companies put the local communities because they had had money and were powerful corporations and well organized whereas the communities had no money and high illiteracy. The government of Ghana has also left these communities to deal directly with these large corporations to negotiate on a number of issues that are sometimes very technical including compensation, resettlement, dealing with cyanide spillage among others. There is a gap in the capacity at which these local communities could get organized because some of the chiefs had become part of the mining lobby through contracts and other benefits (Owusu-Koranteng, 2010). Politics played a role in the issue because apparently Newmont claimed that they had invested heavily in the exploration process, hence they reserved the right to mine in the area otherwise they would take the country to court. In essence, they were given the permit; they are mining now and the farmers are facing very serious consequences of this activity (Anane/FIAN, 2012 - interview).

Newmont on the other hand has provided its opinions on issues relating to the activities of WACAM. In the company’s view, WACAM attended and took part in the 2008 public meeting at Akyem and in doing so, attempted to bribe some community members to disrupt such meetings. WACAM has also been invited on several occasions to observe meetings between the company and community members, but they have always declined such requests. The company has also indicated that they do not believe that WACAM is an organisation that advocates for local communities, but rather, an anti-mining organisation that seeks to prevent the establishment and disruption of mining activities. (Newmont Fact Sheet, 2009).
Analysis of several news reports and interviews both online and for this paper suggest that these two parties disagree on a number of issues mainly pertaining to their interests and goals. The perspectives WACAM and Newmont hold against each other is related to issues of legitimacy and rationality. An interpretation of these perspectives is that each party tries to play down the legitimacy of the other. Habermas (1996) has indicated legitimacy is only an indication of stability using the toleration levels of those who are governed. The utterances of WACAM and Newmont have the tendency of shifting the toleration levels of the people in these communities by impacting on their rationality. Elliot (2010) has indicated that rationality is a practical ethic by which people orient themselves to life. Once rationality is shifted, people are likely to resist the activities of one party or even both. These attempts to play down the legitimacy of the other party makes it difficult and almost impossible for them to understand the other’s perspectives, and creating further difficulty for them to reach a common understanding and coordination of actions.

Another interpretation of these perspectives is that there is an absence of trust to the interaction that exists between these two parties. Neither parties trust in the interaction between themselves as well as the interaction and the intention behind the interaction between the other party and the local communities.

These perspectives also assert the second premise of Symbolic Interactionism which indicates that the meanings of symbols are derived and arise from the social interaction of actors (Blumer, 1986). In essence, each actor has provided information on another actor based on the form interaction with that actor or the perceived issues in the interaction of other actors. From these perspectives, it is now possible to make a diagrammatic representation of the perspectives and relationships among the actors in the Akyem area.

![Figure 3: perspectives and relationships in Akyem](image)

**Figure 3: perspectives and relationships in Akyem**

Figure 3 is a simplified version of the perspectives of the actors in the Akyem area thus describing the relationship amongst them. This is the result of analysis of the indicators of cordial and strained relationships as defined earlier in this paper. Trust, enhanced communication, and cooperation between actors are the attributes of cordial relationship. Strained relationship on the other hand would inhibit the ability of actors to understand and accept the perspectives of other actors, and makes it difficult to promote a positive form of
interaction amongst them. What is worth noting in figure 3 is the strained relationship that exists between the locals on one side, and local reps and Newmont on different sides. This can be explained by analysing current political system and issues of legitimacy. There are two political systems in Ghana: the democratic representative system and the monarchical system, thus there are members of parliament, chiefs, and heads of district assemblies. According to Habermas (1996) these are legitimate systems as long as they contribute to the stability of the society. In these areas, there are people with varied occupations, but the predominant profession is farming. When it comes to issue of value of crops on land and compensation, the major actors are the mining companies and the leadership of these communities. Even though the government and Newmont organise forums on compensation, the major actors in negotiating compensation are the leadership of these communities and not individual farmers. According to some of the respondents, there are occasions where individual farmers are involved in the negotiation process, but even with that, it is the value advised by the leadership of these communities that are accepted.

The strained relationship between the locals and the government is based on feelings of neglect by the latter. The other strained relationships are based on factors of disagreement essentially based on interest and goal interference.

Figure 3 portrays a typical example of the institutional problems that surround modern democratic systems. According to Habermas (1996), decisions in modern political systems are not rationally justified; rather, they are expressions that are shaped by attributes of dominating cultures. Habermas also indicate that the individual interests of elite citizens motivate them in their decision making processes. Cordial relationship in Figure 3 is maintained mainly amongst the government, Newmont and local representatives; and the claim among the other members of the community is that the chiefs and other leaders have tendered only to their individual needs and preferences whiles neglecting the superior needs of the entire community.

4.3.2 Wassa Area
The first person interviewed in this area indicated that it not likely to interview any individual or group that would provide positive perspective on Golden Star Resources (GSR) Limited and their activities. Even though this paper was based on qualitative survey, the information provided by the respondents indicated that most of the people in the Prestea and Himan townships tend to be critical towards GSR. This notion has also been articulated in many news paper articles. Responses from interviews suggested that the company’s activity adversely affected the communities, but the company refused to indulge the locals in any of their activities; “instead the does whatever pleases them without taking into account the effect these have on the surrounding communities” (Opinion leader). One of the interviewees compared GSR with Sankofa Mines, a smaller mining company in a neighbouring community, and he claims indulged the local communities in each of their activities. Interviewees also indicated that there are claims that there are people who have been forcefully evicted from their places of accommodation without due compensation. Some of them insisted that each and every individual I would ask to interview would never be able to indicate any positive note in the operations of GSR in the Himan, Prestea and Dumase areas.

Blumer (1969) emphasize the importance of symbolic interaction in the life of human being. A society is made up of groups of people in association, and such association exists through member interactions by interpretation of symbols that are well defined in these societies. This
helps shape the actions of people because they are made to take into account the action of other people or groups within the society. This helps with the creation and recognition of a society or group’s identity. People present themselves to others and others also present themselves to these people and this helps people to guide their actions according to the identity that has been created as a result of this interaction. Symbolic interactionists believe that each individual has a reference group from which perspectives are shared. The bond that exists between members of a society allows them to borrow and use each others’ perspectives. People tend to build upon the perspectives of others and use them as their version of reality. People in the Wassa area in the Western Region of Ghana do not detach themselves from this system of borrowing perspectives. In Prestea, Dumase and Himan, most respondents claimed that people have been subjected to harassment by the security forces of the company even though they have no real evidence of such cases. People in these areas, according to the respondents, are generally inclined to have the perspective that GSR is a “bad” company that has no regard for the rights of people living in these communities. The Wassa area has the largest concentration of mines in Ghana and many of the communities have reported of the cultural, economic and social violations they have been subjected to by some of the mining companies. There are also the perceptions that because the government is receiving huge sums of moneys as royalties and tax revenues from these companies, it has turned a blind eye on the plight of local mining communities; and many NGOs and other independent bodies have iterated this issue in several television and news paper reports.

“|The government does almost nothing to stop GSR in the way they treat us. Sometimes the regional minister comes over in his helicopter to have meetings with the company, but we don’t believe they are helping us because they receive a lots and lots of money from GSR”. (Committee Leader)

Most of the respondents also were of the view that they receive assistance from some NGOs such as WACAM and FIAN to organize peaceful protests in the various communities on many issues.

Nana Ntebo Pra IV, the divisional Chief of Himan-Prestea has expressed the need for a review of the mining laws in Ghana because the current laws allows mining companies to wield so much power that local communities such as Prestea and Himan in the Wasa area are always suffering from human rights abuses and environmental pollution (Ghana News Agency, 2011)

Several advocate organisations have had problems with GSR on many issues ranging from pollution to socio-cultural and economic concerns. According to WACAM, it is strange that a company as big as GSR is giving undue harsh treatment to the poor people of Prestea, Dumase, Himan. “It is sad because the money that this company is making is blood money and the government and any other entity that benefits from it must feel guilty” (Owusu-Koranteng/WACAM, 2008).

FIAN as an agency has its perceptions of GSR and its operations. According to them, has been a disaster; their mine ride in the town has several consequences for the hospital, and vibrations from use of explosives has resulted in cracks on the walls of the hospital, police station and many other buildings in the Prestea area. has been a thorny issue in the work of FIAN and the members of the community. It has been the worse company in the history of mining in the country. “They are recalcitrant, they just don’t care and do whatever they want to do without taking into consideration of the effects it has on people and the environment” (Anane/FIAN-interview)
Figure 4: perspectives and relationships in Wassa

Figure 4 is a simplified version of the perspectives of the actors in the Akyem area thus describing the relationship amongst them. This depicts a scenario different from that in the Akyem area. In the Wassa area, the only cordial relationship Golden Star Resources maintain is with the government. Most parties in this area have exhibited a lack of trust for GSR as a company, and lack of trust in their interaction. Most of these strained relationships stem from issues of lack of trust, and strong perceptions of goal and interest interference.

Due to escalated tension between and its host communities (especially Bogoso and Prestea), the government of Ghana has intervened and made it possible for both parties to sign a new CSR agreement that focuses on relationship and sustainability, development foundation and local employment agreements. These agreements detailed key guidelines that would enable to work together and coexist for their mutual benefit. During the same occasion of signing the agreement, the Bogos/Prestea Mine Mediation Committee made up of representatives of local communities and GSR was also established to work out possible ways of coexisting in tandem with the new corporate social responsibility agreement (Aguiar, 2012; Opoku, 2012).

4.4 Action and Reaction

Symbolic interaction is important in studies of communication; it tries to explain how people explain reality, and also tries to explain the meaning people give to gestures (Charon, 2009, Blumer 1969). A gesture is part of an ongoing act that portrays parts of the larger act, and they are interpreted as intended action of the actor. The respondent on the other hand organizes his/her response on the basis of the perceived meaning of the action. In Habermas’ dramaturgical action, an actor’s action is based on how the actor wants to be perceived by his audience. Over recent years, there have been several engagements between local communities and mining companies on many issues ranging from economic to environmental and social concerns. Since awareness has been created through globalization of opposition to multinationals, social movements of mining communities, and the increase in capacity and cooperation of NGOs, the issue of community engagement has become important for mining
companies in enhancing their reputational and political statuses (Jenkins, 2004). This has guided mining companies to undertake several Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives in local mining communities. These initiatives also serve as illustration of how mining companies hope to be perceived by local communities, because through these, mining companies can perceive themselves to be part of the community. Goffman (1959) in discussing presentation of self indicates that when people engage in an act, they expect others to take the impression of those acts seriously, and also base their definition of the actor on the impressions possessed in the act. In this regard corporate social responsibility is an act that mining companies put up for local communities to define and accept the companies as part of these communities. Whether these acts are believed or not depends on the conviction of these communities, and in Ghana, and especially in the Wassa area, the local communities do not perceive Golden Star Resources as part of these communities.

The strategic advisory group of the International Organisation for Standardization (ISO) has described CSR as an approach for organisations that seeks to address social, economic and environmental issues in a way that benefits people, community and society (Leonard and McAdam 2003). These are initiatives that are balanced on addressing the needs and demands of local communities, and the need to make profit from operations. Essentially, mining companies frame their attitudes towards building and strengthening their relationships with their stakeholders, employees and the local communities.

In the Akyem area, Newmont has provided a school, and provided extra medical facilities to the community hospital as part of its CSR initiatives. The aim of the company’s CSR initiatives is to collaborate with communities and government to work together in order to minimize the impact of their project and also to create opportunities in these communities. After relocating some of the communities into blocked housing units, the company has also initiated some alternative employment opportunities. Newmont has also developed the Newmont Akyem Development Foundation (NADeF) to enable funding of selected development projects and educational scholarship schemes. Through this, the company is hoping to build a strong company-community relationship, and also to enhance their international reputation for community sustainability (Akwetey-Okunor, 2012).

For G, the aim of CSR is to improve social services and enhance economic development. Some of the initiatives include Golden Star Development Foundation which provides funds for selected projects, and establishment of the 890ha Golden Star Oil Palm Plantation (Thorpe, 2011).

Habermas emphasize in his normatively regulated action that when actors within a society are confronted with a situation, they act according to the values and norms within the group. This can be perceived as attachment of people to their interests and goals. In many of these mining communities, their primary interests reside in farming whiles their goals are entrenched in socioeconomic development. When mining activities and CSR initiatives contradict with interests and goals, people are likely to put up some form of resistance. Even though these can be considered positive CSR initiatives, many individuals and groups including WACAM do not consider them worthy of a replacement of the loss these local communities endure because of mining activity. The issue is not just urbanizing these communities and building block houses for them; it is crucial to take into consideration sustenance of their livelihood when their lands have been taken from them (Owusu-Koranteng/WACAM, 2008). The issue is that a farmer will always be a farmer. Some of the mining companies have argued that they could put in place alternative livelihood projects for these farmers, but the point is that you could not in essence change one’s occupation from farming for instance to the manufacture
of batik or soap. This is the case in the Newmont Akyem area. Transformation of occupation has never been a successful endeavour but it is still the norm in these communities basically because of inadequate or the outright lack of market survey (Anane/FIAN, 2012).

In both instances, there are issues that culminate in inadequate opportunities to discuss the problems of these communities as have been indicated by many of the respondents. Some of the respondents who in the Akyem area who were not community leaders or opinion leaders alleged that their leaders were corrupt and had taken bribes from Newmont and given the company permission to move unto their farmlands. An interpretation of this situation is that Newmont seems to give the impression of listening through provision of compensation, which as per the complaints of the people, is insufficient and unsubstantial. In the Wassa area, every individual interviewed alleged that GSR always operate in areas and acted on issues without due consultation of the community.

These allegations indicate that these communities are not involved in the decision making processes. In other instances, there is the allegation that some of the local leaders lacked organizational capacity and the ability to negotiate on level terms with mining companies because of ignorance or illiteracy (Owusu-Koranteng, 2010).

People have organized protests on several occasions to express their concern about their supposed plight in these communities. In essence, they have evoked a certain image in the minds of other Ghanaians and the world by presenting their opinions through protests. This behavior has not been spontaneous, but a calculated attempt at expressing their experiences to the world (Hanermas, 1984). It is therefore imperative for these parties to reach an understanding about the situation.

4.5 Communication and Deliberation

The issue of conflict several debatable aspects; some argue it to be a destructive force within societies whilst others see it as a potential for change and constitutional reform. This has been the focus of this paper – to examine whether conflicts within mining communities have constructive or destructive potential. Conflict is a social phenomenon and is borne of human social interaction. The Akyem and Wassa areas have been examined and based on the findings, it is apparent that the conflict in the Wassa area tends to have destructive potential based on violent clashes in the past and also intensified strain in the relationship that exists between the communities and Golden Star Resources. In the Akyem area on the other hand, there is also strain in the relationship between the local communities and Newmont, but this relationship is not as potentially destructive as that which exist in the Wassa area.

According to Hallgren (2003), it is possible to mitigate the destructive nature of conflict through deliberative democracy and communicative planning, but I also think that deliberations and communicative actions have to be backed by proper policy instruments and actions that promote peaceful coexistence among actors. People judge actions according to the belief that such actions run parallel or contrary to the existing normative context. If people deem an action as illegitimate and contrary to the existing principles that guide their livelihood, there is bound to be resistance (Habermas, 1984). The complaints from farmers about changing their source of livelihood from farming to alternative and unfamiliar practices raises several concerns in the Akyem area because it inhibits the creation and building of interpersonal relationship between members of these communities and Newmont. If there is no agreement between Newmont and the citizenry of the Akyem area, there cannot be proper coordination of actions between them because of lack of understanding. To achieve
understanding of issues and actions, there need to be widespread public participation and reaching of consensus through public dialogue instead of the exercise of legal and political power (Bolton, 2005). In the Akyem area, there is participation amongst the actors, but this is not widespread. In the forums organised by Newmont, NGOs and ENGOs are invited to be participant observers, and do not contribute in the dialogue process that ensues between Newmont and the community members. They in turn report to Newmont on their observations and areas in the dialogue process and decisions that require possible alterations. In the situation in the Wasssa area, at least based on information available, most of the issue and incidents seem to stem from the exercise of probable legal and political power resources available for Golden Star Resources.

Effective communication in decision making is an essential component in dealing with contentious issues bordering on community sustainability. According to the practical theory of Trinity of Voice, Senecah (2004) identify that in such a scenario, the local people and advocate agencies have access. Access provides the opportunity and safety for people to engage and be heard in decision making processes (Walker et al, 2007). While locals have the opportunity to sufficiently express their opinions and choices in forums and discussions, the NGOs only serve the role as observers and do not make any contribution in these discussions, but are allowed to comment on their perspectives on outcome and process that guide these discussions. This accords these groups the opportunity to air their view on issues that border on community sustainability, because according to Nana Adarkwah, Chief of Yayaaso, Newmont does not embark on any major activity without prior consultation with the local community.

The situation seems to be different in the Western Region and in the Wasssa area to be precise, because on several occasions, the chiefs, together with the entire citizenry have expressed feelings of being marginalised by GSR. Access as a concept is relatively on a minimal level in this area because many people believe that they do not have the opportunity to air their grievances to either the company or the government. In their (people in the Wasssa area based on interviewees’ perspectives) opinion, attempts to have discussions with GSR have proved to be futile on some occasions. FIAN has also indicated that GSR is not always receptive to invitations to discussions. Most people believe GSR is cynical in their approach in dealing with community issues.

It is essential for purposes of peaceful coexistence for people to have the perception that their views on issues count as important (Walker et al, 2006). Habermas (1996) argues that democratic practices can be made legitimate by inculcating the perspectives of the public in the decision making process. He indicates that people should be able and allowed to deliberate on issues to produce legitimately accepted outcomes. In this sense, legitimacy would provide stability in the face of disagreement amongst actors. The use of legitimacy in this context sheds light on the current trend of events in politics in several scenarios. Legitimacy is considered a good measure of stability as recognised by actions of the citizenry of a community. In this regard, the power exhibited by such mining companies as Newmont and Star Resources in Ghana seems to be illegitimate because of the instability in the areas of their operations.

It is fair to indicate once again that the situation in the Wasssa area has taken a destructive nature thus forcing the government to intervene by indulging both parties (i.e. GRS and local community) to set up the Bogoso/Prestea Mine Mediation Committee and also sign the new Corporate Social Responsibility Agreement. The situation in the Akyem area on the other hand has seen aspects of constructive dialogue between some of the actors especially between
the local representatives and Newmont. According to some deliberative democrats, these deliberations that only involve the local representatives and Newmont alone is a good representation of deliberative democracy since these deliberations are based on issues that border on existential attributes and not entirely based on justice (Mouffe, 2000). For instance the Ghana Chamber of Mines perceive the interests of the host communities as those related to corporate social responsibility and not by mandated by the constitution. In its opinion, CSR should not be seen as the hallmark of development, but rather a social and economic support for government to aid development of communities and the country at large (Aguiar, 2012). Thus some can therefore argue that the public sphere could be omitted in such deliberations which are in essence based on reaching compromises. For a community to function effectively, there has to be a toleration of varied opinions (Mouffe, 2000), and this is of course taken in the contextual framework that encompass mining companies as part of their host community. In this regard, it is possible to view both parties (i.e. mining companies and host communities) as friendly enemies who can live together for mutual benefit. In the Wassa area, recent activities have brought to bear the fact that the Bogoso and Prestea communities possess deep-seated ill-will towards Golden Star Resources Limited. This antagonistic situation between these parties resulted because even though they share a symbolic space (as a community), the respect the parties have for each other and rules that govern democratic interaction are distorted in the essence that not all perspectives are tolerated by either party.

The issues that relate to the conflict in these areas border on livelihood and health; and it is natural for people to become passionate and emotional about issues which in their view are essential aspects of life. The agonistic pluralist advocates that such passions must not be eliminated from the public sphere; rather, they must be rallied around democratic designs. In this regard, channels must be provided for people to be able to express their grievances on issues related to parties they consider as opposition and not enemies. In essence, the general populace of mining communities must be able to accept these mining companies as members of their communities with opposing perspectives and vice versa. This will help to alter the antagonistic relations that exist between these communities and the mining firms. This mechanism is clearly not available in the Wassa area even in the face of signing the new CSR agreement. In the Akyem area however, there are signs that these mechanisms are in place to enhance the co-existence of the parties involved, even though there are isolated incidents of antagonistic relations especially between Newmont and WACAM that proves otherwise. Even with that, it can still be argued that even though these mechanisms have been put in place, according to Newmont, WACAM has refused to engage. In essence, it is important that parties in both areas (i.e. Wassa and Akyem) are able to appreciate the values and perspectives of both parties and not suppressing these values and perspectives using political influence.
5 CONCLUSION

A dispute in the mining industry between mining companies and local communities is a common phenomenon, and an assessment of these disagreements is essential because they can potentially develop into constructive change processes. Sometimes the conflict dynamics amongst the actors can inhibit rational decision making and consume resources in a destructive way. What was important for this paper was to analyse aspects of these conflicts that would make it possible to determine whether they have constructive or destructive potentials. The issues in Papua New Guinea and Peru that were given as examples of mining-related conflicts are able to provide a description of the issues that promotes conflict. Issues described in the Akyem and Wassa areas in Ghana on the other hand, takes an in-depth view of communication, perspectives and interaction of the actors to draw a conclusion as to whether these conflicts possess constructive or destructive potential. The reason for assessing conflict in this manner is to determine how a country like Ghana can discover positive potentials in issues that are considered destructive with the ability to inhibit development.

This study has shed limelight on some of the issues that surround specific mining related conflicts in Ghana by touching on some of the perspectives, values and interests of the parties involved. It also analysed the social, power and political contexts and the role of other parties that aid or inhibits disputes between mining companies and local communities. It then made use of theories in Environmental Communication to make analysis of these disputes to determine whether they possess constructive or destructive attributes based on the definition of constructivity or destructivity of conflicts.

Constructivity has been defined based on attributes of interactions which contribute to increased understanding of perspectives, goals, concerns, values, estimations, assumptions and emotions amongst parties involved. It also involves such attributes such as trust and cordial relationships that make it possible for actors to view each other as adversaries and not enemies. Destructivity on the other hand puts emphasis on social interactions which conduces actors to diminish their understanding of each others’ perspectives and concerns. In this regard, there exist strained relationships and mistrusts amongst the parties in conflict therefore they view each other’s perspectives as that of enemies.

Having analysed the interactions and relationships amongst the actors in both the Akyem and Wassa areas, this paper can conclude that both areas exhibit aspects of constructivity and destructivity.

In the Akyem area, the contentious issues have Newmont, the local communities and WACAM as the main actors. After examining the relationship among these actors, it was discovered that there seems to be some form of constructivity in the conflict among the actors. The main point is that certain avenues of communication have been established amongst the; actors especially between the leadership of the local communities and Newmont that makes it possible for them to engage in dialogue, and also allows them to view the other’s perspective as a challenge and not with feelings of antagonism. This makes it possible for these to exhibit behaviors that allows for constructive dialogue and cooperation. The situation between the general citizenry and Newmont seems to be different because they perceive the actions of the company to be particularly contrary to the normative pattern that guides their livelihoods. The disagreement here is borne in the issue of interest interference because the mine affects their land, and the fact that the alternative crafts such as soap and batik manufacture is not in line with farming practices they are conversant with. Even though there is continued dialogue between these two parties, there seems to be growing tension among the people concerning
the activities of Newmont. Because these parties are able to engage in dialogue, the destructive potential in this instance is minimized. In essence, since this is a new conflict, it is important that it is managed in the proper manner to enable the parties, especially the local people to view Newmont as an adversary and not an enemy for long lasting peaceful coexistence. The destructive aspect of conflict in this area is borne in the relationship between Newmont and WACAM. Indications from the media and information available from Newmont suggest that these parties have failed to engage in dialogue; with this encounter having accusations and counter accusations. Both parties also view the other as an enemy and each others’ perspectives with disdain.

Contrary to the situation in the Akyem area, the situation in the Wassa area can be deemed destructive due to the fact that the only perspective the locals have on Golden Star Resources is that of an enemy that has activities that inhibits their livelihood and infringes on their human rights. The tension between the local people and has escalated into violent clashes that has compelled the government intervene by indulging both parties to sign a new CSR agreement. This escalation was due to the fact that the locals were of the view that ’s actions proved that they did not take the perspectives and values of the local communities into consideration before embarking on any activity which could affect their lives. There is also minimal interaction between these two parties thus making is difficult to engage in dialogue. The new CSR agreement signed between both parties could proof to be a stepping stone in the direction of constructivity in the area if it is able to stand the test of time. As it stands now, only time and the level of interaction between these parties will determine the direction of this conflict in future.
References


Timewithdavid, 2010. Daniel Owusu-Koranteng (2), Executive Director of WACAM. [video online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuPM1YKrJp0> [Accessed 20 August 2012].


Alexlalisl, 2008. WACAM-Wassa Association of Communities Affected by Mining. [video online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zXeUl8HZsW4> [Accessed 20 August 2012].


Questionnaire to Newmont

As part of the Master of Sustainable Development (MSD) program at Uppsala University in Sweden, I am writing my thesis is in the field of Environmental Communication, and I am looking at issues related to communication between mineral extraction companies, authorities and the civil society in Ghana. I am interested in learning more about negotiations and discussion with authorities and companies about mining, and also on coordination with local communities and NGOs.

I must note that all information provided by respondents will be considered and treated as academic material for academic purposes only.

Ludrick Kwadwo Gyapong

The information I seek is on views, and experiences in discussion and collaboration amongst company, government, local communities and NGOs or ENGOs.

1. As a mining company, *Newmont Ghana Gold Limited* (NGGL) would certainly have some sort of bond with the local communities within the Ahafo area and New Abirem District. How does the company communicate with these communities? *(the information needed is whether the company communicates with these communities through selected groups or individuals)*

2. Has the company had any problems in communicating issues with these communities? *(In what circumstances and when?)*

3. There have been several media reports on the problems that Newmont faces with local communities in both the Ahafo and Akyem concession areas. What are some of these issues, and who are the stakeholders involved?

4. What in Newmont’s view is the cause of these problems?

5. Are there any formal or informal channels through which grievances from either local communities or NGGL are lodged?

6. Is the company aware of activities of Oxfam, Wassa Association of Communities Affected by Mining (WACAM), Earthworks, and Foodfirst Information and Action Network (FIAN) in the mine areas?
7. If yes, has there ever been any form of communication or discussion between the company, the local communities and any or some of these organisations operating in the Akyem or Ahafo area?

8. Has there been any form of collaboration between Newmont and any of these organisations on any project?

9. Apart from these NGOs, are there any other NGOs or environmental NGOs that Newmont collaborates with the company on some projects or provides liaison with local communities and other agencies?

10. If yes, has there ever been any form of communication or discussion between the company, the local communities and any or some of these organisations operating in the Akyem and Ahafo area?

11. Has there been any form of collaboration between Newmont and any of these organisations on any project?

12. In March of 2009, FIAN what they called Global Campaign and Urgent Action which had their perceived details of potential violations on the social, cultural and economic rights of the people in the Akyem area. This was sent to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food. Was there any response to this campaign from NGGL?