

**COMMUNICATIVE AND COLLABORATIVE CONSTITUTION OF COMMUNITIES
OF PRACTICE: THE CASE OF COLLABORATOIRE 2020**

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ABSTRACT

This case study focused on the three concepts coined as the 3Cs: communication, collaboration, and community of practice, and how these concepts can be related to development. It attempted to examine how communication led to collaboration by looking at the communicative constitution within a community of practice engaging in inter-organizational collaboration. It applied the communicative constitution of organization (CCO) approach anchored to Luhmann's Theory of Social Systems. Following Yin's case study research design, it investigated the communicative events within the ColLaboratoire 2020, a community of practice which explored to address specific UN SDGs by applying imaginative, methodologically innovative, and radically multiple-disciplinary approaches to six research challenges, namely: designing the world for aging; self-care kit for service and support workers; environmental empathy; fixing social media; transformative education for all; and reimagining sustainability. Series of communicative events were used as evidence to prove the proposition that ColLaboratoire 2020 (Community of Practice) is the visible manifestation of communicative acts; that is, communication leads to a collaboration resulting in a community of practice. The sources of evidence included participant observation, archival records, documentation, and key informant interviews. The study results showed that ColLaboratoire 2020 could be considered a manifestation of CCO's principle that organizations emerged through communication. With the series of evidence presented in this study, a community of practice (ColLaboratoire 2020) had surfaced through collaboration which emanated from communication through the mnemonics COLLABORATION(Courting, Obliging, Levelling-Off, Liaison, Acceptance, Boodle fight, Organized, Acknowledgement, Tenacity, Integrity, Ownership, and Nourishing).

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Introduction

In 2012, Quebral redefined development communication (DevCom) as the “*science of human communication linked to the transitioning of communities from poverty in all its forms to a dynamic, overall growth that fosters equity and the unfolding of individual potential.*” She further explained that this change in definition is a “*result of insightful research and practice.*”

Dynamic has always been a buzzword among its practitioners, as this is how they unanimously describe DevCom. Flor (2007) affirmed that “*its [DevCom] breadth and depth differ in time because of the volume of new knowledge and information that goes into it.*” In this digital age where globalization is a norm, even the practice of DevCom has become dynamic; it continues to change. Thus, new terms and concepts are expected to come out.

Although the term collaboration is nowhere to be found in the literature of DevCom, experts say that the current practice of DevCom applies this concept. There may be other terms existing in the practice of DevCom which are somehow related to it. The terms such as participation, cooperation, partnership, and networking (linkage, alliance building) are commonly heard and known among DevCom practitioners. But how does the term collaboration differ from these terms, which are all part and parcel of DevCom? Though a familiar term, collaboration may be confused with participation, cooperation, partnership, and networking.

To clarify, Baker (2015) has emphasized that collaboration is a specific form of cooperation. While cooperation works on tasks and actions, collaboration works on the plane of ideas, understanding, and representations. Collaboration can be defined as “a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their limited vision of what is possible” (Gray, 1989). This broad definition allows it to be used in various fields, though primarily used in research, and can even be as simple as advice and insights to active participation (Katz & Martin, 1997). The definition of collaboration may change according to the context it is being used. It may also include the degree of participation a participant must be involved with to be called a ‘collaborator.’ In this increasingly globalized and connected world, collaboration does not merely mean “working with others.” This study puts collaboration in context as dealing with interpersonal conflict, negotiating power, dealing with other actors and cultures.

Further, this research takes communication as an essential aspect of collaboration. That is, collaboration is impossible without rich and clear communication. In this case, an organization (a

community of practice) can emerge through collaboration that emanates from communication. It also puts forward that the concept of collaboration has always been a vital part of the DevCom practice.

Many studies on organizational communication apply the conventional approach based on the informational view of communication. These studies focus on the communication within the organization with consideration of the transfer of information from the sender to the receiver. But studies have shown that there are better ways of studying communication in an organization. Examining the implications of communication processes in organizations seems to be a more logical way of probing this subject. This approach floating in the literature is identified as the *communicative constitution of organization* (CCO). The framework of this study focuses on the CCO perspective, which embraces that communication constitutes organization. As Putnam, Nicotera, and McPhee (2009) put it, “*organizations are communicatively constituted.*”

In earlier years, Craig (1999) forwarded that communication constitutes social reality, and better communication becomes the answer to social problems. In his article, Schoeneborn (2011) mentioned several authors who are acknowledging the constitutive role of communication for organizations. Schoeneborn’s list included Weick (1995), Putnam & Nicotera (2008), and Ashcraft, Kuhn, and Coreen (2009), among others. In 2017, Schoeneborn and Vasquez identified that the three major theoretical approaches of CCO scholarship include the *Montreal School*, which James R. Taylor pioneered; the *Four Flows* model, which primarily involves the work of Robert D. McPhee and his colleagues; and Niklas Luhmann’s *Social Systems Theory*.

Cooren (2012) forwarded that Montreal School’s approach recognizes that people in interaction, unconsciously or consciously, make some things act or speak in the forms of beliefs, views, principles, ideology, and values. Taylor et al. (2006) clarified that this approach holds that organizing happens at the level of interaction, including the nonhuman agents implicated in text and conversation. On the other hand, McPhee’s approach draws attention to four communication processes: membership negotiation, reflexive self-structuring, activity coordination, and institutional positioning as constituting organizations (Brummans et al., 2014).

Schoeneborn (2011) deliberated that although many of the recent studies have recognized the constitutive role of communication for organizations, it cannot be denied that Luhmann’s theory of social systems has enormously contributed to this concept. This is despite Luhmann’s work being not recognized internationally during the earlier years due to the lack of translation of Luhmann’s writings to the English language. His original work was written in German.

Cooren et al. (2011) explain that Luhmann’s system approach likens organizations to systems whose production and reproduction operate through a selection of content, form, the reason for

their existence, and the interpretation of messages received. *“Luhmann’s theory of social systems highlights that organizations are fundamentally grounded in paradox, as they are built on communicative events that are contingent by nature.* In constructing his general sociological theory of autopoiesis, Luhmann chose to treat communication as the basic element of the social system (Seidl, 2004).

Focusing on the CCO approach, this study takes the ColLaboratoire 2020 as its subject. ColLaboratoire 2020 involved a week-long research residency program in multiple-disciplinary research and sustainability in the context of the Philippines. The fellows looked at innovative ways to address the research challenges that combined teaching with applied multidisciplinary research practice. The University of the Philippines Open University’s (UPOU) co-organizers are the University of Plymouth (UoP) and Cognovo Foundation. Other collaborating partners are Curiosity, WeDpro, Space Ecologies Art and Design.

On the side of UPOU, the Faculty of Information and Communication Studies (FICS) led the implementation of this undertaking. For more than twenty years, the UPOU FICS has been conducting development assistance projects (DAP) as part of its extension function. Knowing the importance of collaboration, UPOU-FICS was able to sustain relationships with other organizations, including private, government, and NGOs, locally and internationally. ColLaboratoire 2020 was one of the major DAPs that UPOU FICS has engaged in.

Designed to address several United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ColLaboratoire 2020 can be considered as a community of practice (CoP). Intending to improve their performance, people are now engaging in CoP. Although the term CoP was coined just recently, its concept has been known for ages. Related to knowledge management, people in CoP regularly interact by sharing a common passion or concern for something (Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Unlike KM, which focuses on information systems, CoP puts emphasis on people and the social structures that allow them to learn with and from one another.

ColLaboratoire 2020 is considered a CoP because it possesses the three crucial characteristics of a CoP, which are: domain, community, and practice. As its domain, the core members of ColLaboratoire 2020 share their interests in cognitive development. These people had built relationships over the years by learning together: sharing information, and helping one another achieve their academic pursuits. This study aims to probe how this CoP has emerged from collaboration through communication with the intent to share best practices.

After synthesizing several literature on IOC, Gazley (2017) confirmed that the big knowledge gap emphasizes processes. According to her, the “how” questions related to collaboration are worth greater explorations as scholars tend to delve into the “why” and “what” questions. In their

study, Schoeneborn and Vasquez (2017) recommended that “*an additional avenue worthy of exploration in the development of CCO thinking concerns is the practical implications of this (mostly) philosophical and theoretical endeavor.*” Bergeron and Coreen (2012) explained that theorizing from communication events would logically imply that communication as constitutive of organization research could offer answers to practical issues. Only a few scholars have yet gone in this direction.

Trailing Schoeneborn and Vasquez’ (2017) recommendation, this study hopes to contribute to translating the “*obscure and abstract vocabulary*” of CCO scholarship to “*more concrete and practical terms*” by exploring participant observation (inter subjective approach) as one of its sources of evidence.

As this case study aims to investigate the concept of collaboration as applied in the practice of development communication, it also hopes to contribute to the scholarship of communication with reflections and theoretical orientation on the communicative constitution of organization (CCO).

In general, this study attempted to examine how communication led to collaboration by looking at the communication constitution within a community of practice engaging in inter-organizational collaboration. Specifically, the study sought to: 1) describe how a community of practice was formed through communication, 2) explain how the collaboration happened in a community of practice, and 3) develop a model representing the communicative and collaborative constitution of the community of practice.

Research Methods

This study followed Yin's (2003) recommendations on doing case study research. A case study was used as the research strategy for this paper as it qualifies to the following conditions: 1) the type of research questions: how (or why) questions are being posed; 2) the control investigator has over actual behavioral events: investigator has little control over events; and 3) the degree of focus: the degree of focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.

This research was a descriptive single-case study that described the uniqueness and distinct features of ColLaboratoire 2020. This research strategy was used to describe how ColLaboratoire 2020 was executed. The proposition guided the data collection and analysis that ColLaboratoire 2020 is the visible manifestation of communicative acts; communication leads to collaboration, resulting in a community of practice.

The subject of the study was the ColLaboratoire 2020. The project management team was composed of personnel from the two universities (UoP and UPOU) who are the major collaborators. This study specifically used multiple sources of evidence: 1) participant observation; 2) interview; 3) documentation of the case; and 4) archival records.

This study made use of pattern matching as its analytic technique. The collected data were logically linked with the proposition; an empirically based pattern was compared to the predicted one. Pattern matching was relevant to this descriptive study since the predicted pattern of specific variables is defined before data collection. The relationship between the theoretical proposition and the collected pieces of information were investigated.

To establish the quality of this research, the four tests as suggested by Yin (2003) were followed. These tests include construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability.

For the test of construct validity, the use of multiple sources of evidence and establishing the chain of evidence were sorted out during the data collection phase of this study. Since its inception stages, the key informant has been a valuable part of this study and was consulted during the composition stage. For the internal validity test, pattern-matching was executed during data analysis. For the test of external validity, the use of theory was applied during the research design phase. For the reliability test, observing the case study protocol was applied.

In an attempt to let the readers see and feel how the CoP has been co-constructed through communicative acts, the researcher shared the story behind ColLaboratoire 2020. In this project, the researcher served as the Project Management Officer (PMO), thus was given a stake in the CoP. As PMO, the researcher maintained a relationship with the participants, which somehow made research ethical concerns complicated. In consideration of this relational ethics, which was emphasized by Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011), prior consent from all major participants in this study was requested. In addition, all participants and all names in this study were anonymized.

Results and Discussions

In this study, the researcher took a closer look into the case of ColLaboratoire 2020 and anchored it to the communicative constitution of organization approach focusing on Luhmann's Social Systems Theory. As observed, the social actors involved in ColLaboratoire 2020 have constantly confronted the need to make decisions brought about by the contingent nature of events associated with organizing. As Luhmann's central concept in his theory was decision communication, it is most fitting to use it in this study.

Specifically for this study, the concept of Community of Practice (CoP) represented the ‘organization’ in the CCO. The nature of ColLaboratoire 2020, which was considered a community, is relevant and related to what is being done in the public service at FICS. Wenger (2009) described CoPs as a type of informal learning organization characterized by *“support for members interacting with each other, sharing knowledge, and building a sense of belonging within networks/teams/groups.”*

The researcher followed Yin’s (2003) advice on doing a case study to have a direction. The researcher found case study as the most appropriate research strategy to use because this study mainly dealt with the “how” questions. Likewise, the researcher does not have any control over actual behavioral events. Although the researcher served as the Project Management Officer for this project, there was no direct involvement with the participants’ behavior. The degree of focus of this study is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context. Those are on Yin’s list of conditions for research which thus made this paper qualify for a case study.

This story involved several characters who served as the participants of the study. This included the ColLaboratoire 2020 project management team, composed of personnel from the two universities (UoP and UPOU), the major collaborators for this project. They were named Collaborator 1, Collaborator 2, Collaborator 3, Collaborator 4, and Collaborator 5, respectively. It also involved other characters (participants) who served as mentors during the event: Mentor 1, Mentor 2, Mentor 3, Mentor 4, Mentor 5, Mentor 6, and Mentor 7. Other characters were University Official 1, University Official 2, and ColLaboratoire Staff.

All occurrences that were shared here were based on personal observations and experiences. The communicative events included here are those which the researcher has personally attended to or have knowledge of. As such, what was shared here was how the researcher had witnessed the emergence of a Community of Practice through a series of human interactions that led to collaboration.

The emergence of ColLaboratoire 2020

From 27 January to 02 February 2020, a week-long research residency program was conducted. This was attended by twenty-seven (27) research fellows from different parts of the Philippines and the world, with various backgrounds and disciplines. This was complemented by nineteen (19) multidisciplinary mentors and facilitators.

The residency program was held in Siargao, one of the most famous tourist destinations in the Philippines, an island within the province of Surigao del Norte that is famous for surfing. This was despite the many challenges that the group had faced regarding this concern. These

challenges include the high cost of transportation, accommodation, and food; the worry of UPOU's management about safety; and the difficulty of securing flights for everybody on the same date, among others. Siargao has been a strategic place to conduct ColLaboratoire 2020. Aside from its beautiful setting, which is conducive to learning, there is already an existing interest/focus on sustainability within the local community. It was also mentioned that surfing could be considered a formative part of the magical learning experience.

During the FICS Faculty Council meeting, Collaborator 1 (who also serves as the project leader/proponent) formally introduced ColLaboratoire 2020 to the council. In this meeting, Collaborator 1 gave a background about the ColLaboratoire 2020, how it started, and the events that led to the project's conceptualization. He also explained the rationale behind the project and the plans on how it will be conducted. He emphasized that what made it different from other research training was that aside from addressing the global development challenges, it shall be a combination of teaching and multidisciplinary research practices.

As ColLaboratoire 2020 has been formally introduced by Collaborator 1 in this meeting, it was observed that this, in a way, was some sort of testing the water, trying to get the assurance of the UPOU FICS' support to the project. Through this introduction, all members of the Faculty were informed of this forthcoming project. This phase can be called courting. **Courting** because of the need to sell the idea to management. What is in for them? What benefits will UPOU get from this activity? Therefore, the initiative must spark a relationship that would be sustainable and mutually beneficial for all parties involved.

On 20 February 2019, Collaborator 1 invited prospective collaborators within the UPOU community to attend the Research Conversations, where he presented the plans for the Off the Lip Conference and ColLaboratoire 2020. Off the Lip was a two-day conference that served as the prelude to ColLaboratoire 2020. All fellows were required to attend this conference. This phase can be labeled as obliging. **Obliging** because Collaborator 1 should be more accommodating and be ready to face the decision that may come out of the proposed initiative.

On the following day, an invite to the same event coming from the host unit, UPOU Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs (OVCAA), was sent to all UPOU personnel. A poster was also sent for the promotion of this event. This positive action from the management can be called **lobbying**. This advocacy to engage others is a critical step to get buy-in from prospective partners.

In his email, Collaborator 1 personally invited all those who previously expressed support for or interest in ColLaboratoire 2020 to attend the OVCAA's Research Conversations. He also shared the approved proposal and informed the group about UPOU's commitment to this project. He

also mentioned that this project will be a major activity and will be a part of the UPOU's 25th anniversary celebration; and that strategic planning will also be done during this research conversation.

Through all those communicative events, the researcher became aware and understood what ColLaboratoire 2020 was all about. It was not during the first time that the researcher heard about the term, but it was through the "*recursive articulation of interaction and discourse*" (as how the Montreal School defined communication; and was referred by Taylor and Van Every in 2000 as "*text and conversation*") that the researcher was able to grasp what it was.

This can be related to Luhmann's autopoietic perspective that "*communications are completed only after understanding has taken place.*" Luhmann conceives of communication as a combination of three components: 1) information, 2) utterance, and 3) understanding (Seidl, 2004). In addition, "*communication should not be understood as mere information from a sender to a receiver*" (Hernes and Bakken, 2003). The first two components (information and utterance) were seen in the series of evidence presented. As in the case above, the understanding took place not during the first time the information was uttered. Thus, the communication cannot be considered complete at that point. In their study on Luhmann's autopoiesis, Hernes and Bakken (2003) clarified that "*communication happens essentially through a process in which a system interacts recursively with itself, as new information only makes sense in relation to the structures created by previous information gathering.*" In this case, as the receiver of the message, the researcher was able to make sense of the message after the recursive processes that happen within herself and through the communicative acts that she engaged in. This process is what the researcher calls **leveling off**. A common understanding is critical for organizations to survive. Every member of the team should have clear terms of reference or the ability to make sense of what the relationship is all about.

The email exchanges, the budget planning, the discussion during the meeting, all these communicative events had made the researcher learn what ColLaboratoire 2020 was all about. It was through these recursive events where communicative acts happened one after another that the researcher finally understood what it really was.

In connection with Luhmann's concept of communication, Seidl (2004) suggested a closer look at his (Luhmann's) idea of understanding. Seidl (2004) emphasized that "*the meaning of a communication, i.e., what difference a communication makes for later communications, is only retrospectively defined through the later communications*" In a communicative event, understanding completes the synthesis of the three selections (utterance, information, and understanding).

The communicative events that are being referred here are not only the email exchanges that are written but also the informal chat, telephone conversations, and formal discussions during the meeting and the research conversations. The research conversations and the meetings were composed of unwritten texts. Although the meeting discussions had been transcribed and are now in written form, it was not in the same format during that time when the ideas were presented. Schoeneborn and Vasquez (2017) explained that texts that materialize human sense making are not necessarily written, *“given that any discursive resource that enters meaning-making can be considered a text.”*

Seidl (2004) explained that understanding is related to the ‘principle of hermeneutics’ wherein the listener, not the speaker, decides on the message's meaning since it is the listener’s *“understanding of the set of possibilities constrains the possible meaning of the message.”* This is regardless of whatever the speaker may have in mind (Baecker, 2001).

This also qualifies Taylor and Van Every’s (2000) claim that *“there is already an ‘embryo’ of organization – as long as an organization means ‘getting organized’ – when individuals are engaged in interaction.”* In this case, it can be said that through the evidence presented where a series of discursive events occurred during the initial part of organizing, the ‘embryo’ of ColLaboratoire 2020 has then started to develop.

ColLaboratoire started way back before the researcher got to learn about it. The researcher was able to do a key informant interview with collaborators. From them, the researcher learned how they became a part of this CoP.

During the interview, Collaborator 1 imparted how the idea of ColLaboratoire 2020 started. Its predecessor was a summer school held in the University of Plymouth when he was a Ph.D. student. He further explained that there were many reasons why he decided to initiate this project. He saw the need for interdisciplinary research training; he committed to doing it way back in 2017. He found it helpful and valuable; there were enabling mechanisms, and there was available funding.

His idea was to create a cross-sectoral partnership and deal with translational research. *“Dapat parang (It should be like) the private sector, the public sector, civic society are engaged. At the same time, there have to be both local perspectives and international perspectives. Each of these organizations was meant to bring something like this into the mix.”*

From these KIIs, it was learned that these collaborators had known one another for quite a while as they have worked together in the past. Collaborator 1’s last statement, *“ColLaboratoire is part of the phenomenon of people creating and becoming part of networks of networks,”* can be

related to the concept of CoP. Wenger-Trayner’s (2015) thought that “community is composed of members who build relationships by sharing information and helping one another” can be associated here. These collaborators were “able to develop a shared practice rooted in shared resources such as experiences, stories, tools and ways of addressing recurring problems” (Wenger-Trayner, 2015).

ColLaboratoire 2020 was considered a CoP because it encompasses the crucial characteristics of a CoP. The collaborators shared the same domain of competence: they are all research experts. They shared the same community; Collaborators 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 were all part of CogNovo, a European Union-funded doctoral training program. Collaborator 5 led the said training program. The table below summarizes the description of ColLaboratoire 2020 CoP using Wenger-Trayner’s characteristics of a CoP.

Table 1. Description of ColLaboratoire 2020 Community of Practice Using Wenger-Trayner’s Characteristics

| Wenger-Trayner’s Characteristics of Community of Practice | ColLaboratoire 2020 as Community of Practice |
|--|--|
| <p>Domain Shared domain of interest is the group’s identity expressed through membership</p> | <p>Multidisciplinary research Common purpose Mutual benefits International identity</p> |
| <p>Community Composed of members who build relationships by sharing information and helping one another</p> | <p>Collaborators Research mentors/facilitators Fellows coming from different disciplines and institutions</p> |
| <p>Practice Sharing information and helping one another rooted from shared resources such as experiences, stories, tools, and ways of addressing recurring problems</p> | <p>Combined teaching with applied and multiple-disciplinary research practice resulting in knowledge products such as research proposals Continuous exchange of information through digital communication within the network</p> |

Formalizing the partnership through an MOU (Interactions that led to meaning negotiations)

Among the collaborators, there was a series of email exchanges about the memorandum of understanding. These, plus face-to-face discussions and telephone conversations, detail the agreements incorporated in the MOU.

Collaborator 1 started the MOU thread by giving the researcher the details about the project. He explained that this document should be processed immediately as this will be a requirement for the fund release. He also talked about the personnel and budget requirement. Through these exchanges, ideas on how to run the project were shared. He also introduced the researcher to other project collaborators from UoP's end. Some of the things discussed here related to the MOU were the budget, inclusion of insurance, and involvement of the UPOU Foundation, Inc. Other related concerns like the autopoietic systems program, staff planning and tasks, Off the Lip planning, calendar/schedule, things to do, fund releases, and webpage. All of these involved decisions. Based on the exchanges and agreements embedded in those exchanges, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been generated. Another MOU between UoP and UPOU Foundation, Inc. (UPOU FI) was prepared for fund release purposes.

This communicative event of consummating the relationship is what can be called **liaison**. The connection must be sealed through a Memorandum of Understanding as proof of the relationship between actors or group members. Joining a group, especially with foreign members, may not be as easy as doing locally due to cultural differences and practices that may hinder or enhance relationships.

In consideration of Luhmann's (2003) notion about perpetuating the existence of organizations through a specific type of communication which he calls 'decisional communication.' Luhmann (as cited by Schoeneborn and Vasquez, 2017) explained that social systems are "*made up of decisions, and capable of completing the decisions that make them up.*" The MOU is a product of the communication events (referred to as "decisions" by Luhmann) that occurred between and among the Collaboratoire lead partners, UPOU and UoP.

The generation of MOU can also be related to Montreal School's thought that "*organization is enacted through interaction and is related to processes of meaning negotiation.*" Related to this was the series of interactions shown in the series of exchanges above that eventually brought about the MOU, which formally stated all the agreements set by both parties. Another document that resulted from interactions is the Academic Program Improvement (API) proposal.

Seidl (2004) explained that Luhmann's notion on decision does not conform with the standard meaning of "decision" which is defined as a "choice" or a "choice among alternatives;" rather it should be conceptualized as a specific form of communication, and that "*decision communications are not produced by 'human beings' but by the social system, the organization.*" "*The more clearly the decision is communicated as selection among possible alternatives (report aspect), the less the decision will be accepted by later communications as decision (command aspect)*" (Seidl, 2004).

Looking back, the researcher witnessed many decisions being made while working for ColLaboratoire 2020. As an example, decisions were made even on the simplest things, like the name of the event/CoP. As earlier mentioned, Collaborator 1's group used to call ColLaboratoire 2020 as summer school. Several email exchanges show how the team decided on its nomenclature: ColLaboratoire 2020 Research Residency. It started with a question from Collaborator 1, asking for suggestions on how to call the summer school. Other collaborators made some suggestions and gave comments on one another's proposals. In the end, they decided on its final nomenclature. This nomenclature has been applied as its official name and was used in all the communication (website, letters, etc.) from then on.

In June 2019, the UoP team had the chance to visit the UP Open University, and one of the things they accomplished, together with the UPOU team, was the kick-off meeting with the mentors. There was a journal of activity for this event, and the meeting recording was transcribed.

During the meeting, the researcher learned that the prospective mentors come from different/diverse fields of discipline: psychology, health, education, development communication (environmental communication), data science, computer science, arts, medicine/dentistry. Each of them was asked to give a brief self-introduction. It was noticed that most of the organizing team members and some of the mentors are also members of Space Ecologies Art and Design (SEADS). The project management team had the chance to share some of their experiences during the conduct of the previous summer school. They mentioned some of the things they did, which they considered as effective ways of bringing out ideas from the participants.

In this same meeting, it was mentioned that the project management team is considering Siargao as the venue for this event. Aside from its beautiful setting, there is already an "*existing interest/focus on sustainability within the local community.*" It was also mentioned that surfing could be considered a formative part of the magical learning experience.

As the mentors were oriented about the grouping of mentors and fellows based on research challenges, one of the concerns raised by Collaborator 1 was how to coordinate meetings for

each group of mentors who barely know one another and are coming from different places. He mentioned that each group of mentors need to decide on what approach to use during the training. He suggested providing a space for each group where they can meet as a group and discuss/decide on their plans.

This step in the process of forming may be labeled as **acceptance**. The recognition of individual peculiarities is vital in building relationships and, therefore, should be nurtured at the very onset. The cultural differences, in this case, mentors coming from developed countries, may pose some hindrances or barriers on how mentees can communicate openly with the foreign mentors. In like manner, the mentors may find some difficulty expressing their thoughts given the absence of the face in the name where interactions were mostly through digital communication or email most often.

University Official 1 asked about the expectations (output, report) from the funding agency. The criteria for selecting participants were mentioned as follows: 1) past collaboration experience; 2) ability to collaborate remotely after the project is done; 3) ability to communicate remotely with other participants; 4) ability to think creatively; 5) openness to new perspectives and epistemologies; and 6) potential to contribute to the topics.

The exchanges about the “shared breakfast” showed two different interpretations from two different cultures. A participant from UoP explained that shared breakfast simply means sitting together while having breakfast, giving the participants time and a chance to talk informally. In comparison, a Filipino attendee thought of it as something like a boodle fight or shared plate where all food is laid out and is eaten by hands.

The compact or bonding through eating can be described as **boodle fight** or shared breakfast, as the foreign collaborators call it. Food has a socializing function. This is recognized as part of communal activity, especially among the Filipinos. The adage the best way to a man’s heart is through his stomach plays a role in the formation process of an organization. Culturally, food is the language of the soul. Enjoying one’s food lifts the spirit and, in some way, trickles down to the life of a group of people who come together to achieve a common purpose.

Collaborator 1 shared additional information about his relationship with each one of them. Based on their discussions, it was observed that the partners from UoP are comfortable exchanging jokes with Collaborator 1 and that they are familiar with one another.

Through this meeting, it was noticed that Collaborator 1 shared some uncertainties through his statements during this meeting: “I’m really kind of nervous because I convinced all of you that this is a good idea;” “We don’t know what to expect;” “Okay, if there is nothing else, thank you

so very much for imparting on this crazy adventure, and I hope it doesn't turn out disastrously." The partner from UoP gave reassurance to the proponent's concern by saying, "I think it will turn out really good."

During an informal talk after this meeting, Collaborator 1 mentioned that doing this activity was a bit stressful for him as he needed to gather his colleagues and friends from different groups, not to mention the different relationships he has with each one of them.

This face-to-face meeting with UoP personnel formalized the partnership and marked the commencement of *formally organizing* the event. In this meeting, the participants had the chance to know the individual's background and disciplines and heard their thoughts about ColLaboratoire 2020. Some decisions were also made regarding the qualifications of fellows, the next steps, and the scheduling of some activities.

As soon as implementation details started to come out, Collaborator 1 initiated the creation of the ColLaboratoire 2020 website. This can be found at <https://collaboratoire20.cognovo.org/>. Although Collaborator 1 was the one who managed its construction, there were also a series of communicative acts which initiated this. Aside from the email exchanges, undocumented face-to-face interactions and telephone calls were also made for this purpose. Not to mention that there were also chains of editing that went with it. Some of its details had also been touched on during the kick-off meeting.

For more strategic communication among partners, fellows, mentors/facilitators, the researcher suggested using an online project management and team communication tool. Three groups were created: one for the fellows, another for the mentors and facilitators, and one for the project management team. This tool has helped the researcher/PMO organize all the communication between and among individuals and groups. All the important documents and files were kept under each group. All registered members of each group can access them anytime. This had also helped the researcher/PMO inform everyone on the activity updates. A review of past discussions and agreements can easily be done as they are all kept in one place.

Since almost all these people are techies, it can be said that they were comfortable using the tool. Although some were not happy receiving several email notifications, this tool has helped the Project Management Team a lot in their communication. This communicative event is what can be described as **organization**. Coordinating with different members with various roles requires a more systematic and organized strategy to keep track of interactions and decision-making points. It would also be a good tool to go back to decisions made, when it was made, whomade it; in short, somebody to shoot or praise for consequences positively or negatively. The use of a digital

platform served as a good mechanism to smoothen communication flow from different directions.

For the Project Management Team, most of the exchanges were concerned with the project implementation, such as registration, flight details, finances, preparations for the events, and some personnel concerns. This is also where files like directory, schedule, information about fellows and mentors, accommodation/flight bookings, and the like were shared.

The page for the fellows was mostly used for the announcements and reminders. In contrast, the page for the mentors/facilitators was mainly used to plan how each research challenge group will conduct the training. They also shared training materials there.

The message board shows how the discussions for each research challenge group were initiated. The numbers indicated on the right side of the board are the number of responses for each main topic. Here, things concerning each research topic were discussed and resolved. This involved a lot of exchanges among the mentors/facilitators and the project management team.

The overall communicative experience can be described as **resilience**. Considering the roles that each partner plays in the process, both mentors and mentees have exchanging roles making boundaries seamless that created an enabling environment to freely express their thoughts and ideas without inhibition. As such, there becomes an **acknowledgment** that each one has a specific role to play that may break or make the organization. The lack of confidence in being able to perform is shadowed by the ability to conform and embrace a new organizational culture that builds the capacity of members to recognize their contribution to make the organization work.

The **tasking** as assigned did not only allow members to develop trust and confidence, so that being a member created a dent in one's intellectual pursuit of doing research with various partners in the country. Acknowledgment of the fact that their intellectual precepts had been recognized by the national university and a university in the UK which somehow built confidence among the fellows. Suffice to say that the relationship between and among collaborators and fellows developed the tenacity or the drive to push for conducting research in a not well-traveled path. The decision to carry on the topic had been a product of robust discussions that eventually ended with research proposals that foreign donors funded. Joining the team also created a sense of **integrity**. The communicative events have shown that participation was offered not only because of the recognition that their research was worthwhile implementing but also the pride in the work they will do and the results that it will generate to provide solutions to problems that could forward human development. The acknowledgment of roles given lends credence to claiming ownership of the relationship. **Owning a responsibility** makes the partner,

mentee, or mentor accountable and responsible for entering into such an agreement with honor and dignity. Inasmuch as the interactions between and among mentors, collaborators, and mentees were fulfilling, it became nourishing in a sense. The **nurturing** and big sister/big brother approach somehow defined how the relationship between and among actors was felt. The ability of the organizers to build the organization as an offshoot of communicative events can be called collectively as **COLLABORATION**.

Collaboration Constructs Community of Practice through Communication

(Communication as an antecedent of Collaboration)

The series of communicative events shared in this study had shown how Luhmann's interpretation of communication occurred. ColLaboratoire 2020 was introduced through a series of communicative acts. In the beginning, Collaborator 1 explained what ColLaboratoire 2020 is through informal talk, via email, and during meetings. It started with the basic information such as what it was all about, his plans on how to implement it, and how it began. It was through these series of communicative events that a more explicit project plan evolved: what are the goals, who will be involved, when and where it be held, how will it be implemented.

Through these communicative events, it can be sensed that there was an "understanding." For Luhmann (Seidl, 2004), understanding is one and the most important of the three communicative event components (which Luhmann also called three selections); communication can only occur if there is an understanding. Understanding is the distinction between the two other components: information and utterance. In the communicative events that happened within the ColLaboratoire 2020, the understanding can be seen in most cases as implied in the subsequent communications and is evident by the continuous interactions and written agreements.

Another important concept of Luhmann's theory is the fourth type of selection, which occurs when the social system is not discontinued: acceptance or rejection of the meaning of communication (decision communication). This selection is considered as part of the subsequent communication. This fourth type of selection can also be seen throughout the ColLaboratoire 2020 communicative events. Examples of these are the criteria of selecting fellows, choice of venue, whether to penalize the fellow who withdrew, and so on.

Luhmann (Seidl, 2004) also noted that decisions are communication events that occur for a certain period and then disappear. Organizations thus need to be understood as precarious accomplishments that can only exist if they ensure a continuous perpetuation and interconnection of decisions as communication events (Schoeneborn, 2011).

Through all these communicative events, the CoP had been formed. It now has its nomenclature (ColLaboratoire 2020). As a starting point, all the important details can be found in the project proposal, which served as a guide in planning the event. The formal agreements were documented in the MOU. The continuous communication among collaborators brought about the ColLaboratoire 2020. The table below summarizes the communicative events that led to the CoP, based on Luhmann’s concept of communication.

Table 2. Summary of communicative events that led to collaboration.

| Luhmann’s Concept of Communication | Communicative Events | Evidence (Communicative Acts) |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Communication is composed of three components: information, utterance, and understanding. Communication is completed only after understanding has taken place.</p> <p>The listener, not the speaker, decides on the message's meaning since it is the listener’s “understanding of the set of possibilities constrains the possible meaning of the message.”</p> | <p>Collaborator 1 introduced the idea of a “summer school” and his plans to organize it.</p> | <p>face to face exchanges email exchanges</p> |
| | <p>Collaborator 1 helped the UoP team prepare the ColLaboratoire 2020 project proposal (information about UPOU, budget proposal, etc.)</p> | <p>email exchanges informal discussions meetings</p> |
| | <p>Collaborator 1 asked for an expression of interest to join him in organizing the ColLaboratoire 2020 among his UPOU colleagues</p> | <p>email exchanges</p> |
| | <p>Collaborator 1 formally introduced ColLaboratoire 2020 to UPOU FICS</p> | <p>FICS Faculty Council Meeting Minutes of the meeting</p> |
| | <p>Collaborator 1 formally introduced ColLaboratoire 2020 to the UPOU community</p> | <p>UPOU Research Conversations</p> |
| <p>There is already an ‘embryo’ of organization – as long as an organization means ‘getting organized’ – when individuals are engaged in interaction.</p> <p>Decisions are communication: Communication happens essentially through a process in which a system interacts recursively with itself, as new information only makes sense in relation to the structures created</p> | <p>All these communications started as information made through utterance. They were not completed until there was an understanding that happened within the listener. All these previous communications from Collaborator 1 were just completed only when the receiver of the message (or the listener) had made sense of these messages and got to understand them. The reactions (prepared the budget, planned the event, etc.) made are proof that there was an understanding that occurred. At this point, the communications are now considered complete.</p> <p>Collaborator 1 initiated organizing the ColLaboratoire 2020: preparation of project proposal preparation of MOU preparation of API creation of website completed implementation plan through consultations with other collaborators</p> | <p>Email exchanges Face to face exchanges Minutes of meeting Journal of activities</p> |
| | <p>At first, the project proposal, the MOU, and the plans emanated from new information. These were produced by the previous information gathered, a product of decisions made along the way through communication.</p> | |

| Luhmann's Concept of Communication | Communicative Events | Evidence (Communicative Acts) |
|---|---|--|
| by previous information gathering. The meaning of communication, i.e., what difference a communication makes for later communications, is only retrospectively defined through the later communications. | The criteria for selecting fellows, the nomenclature of the event, and the venue are examples of communication whose meaning had made sense in later communications. These decisions can be observed in later communications. As concrete examples, the nomenclature was used in all official communication; the criteria were used in selecting the fellow. | |

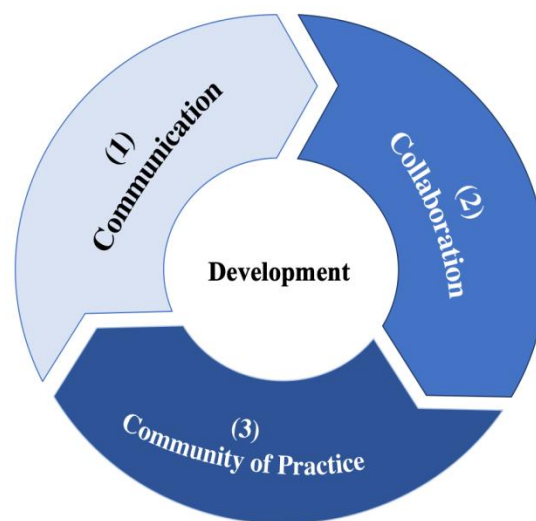
The series of communicative events that were shared here had obviously led to the emergence of the Community of Practice (ColLaboratoire 2020) through collaboration which was generated by communication.

Luhmann stood firm on his statement that “only communications can communicate.” By this, he means that the meaning of communication is only retrospectively defined through the subsequent communications and that it only exists through their relation to other communications (Seidl, 2004). This has been proven by the series of evidence presented in this study.

A model for communicative and collaborative constitution of CoP

Based on the results of this study, a model for the communicative and collaborative constitution of a CoP was developed. The figure below shows the relationship among the concepts: communication, collaboration, community of practice, and development. As related earlier, the CoP (ColLaboratoire 2020) was formed through a series of communicative events. It was through these communicative events that information started to flourish. This information surfaced, and understanding took place. There were decisions made which brought about ColLaboratoire 2020. In short, communication is the antecedent of collaboration; collaboration then leads to the creation of community. And whatever happened during the ColLaboratoire 2020 Research Residency (where we held it, who are the partners, who are the participants, how are we going to conduct it, etc.), they are all products of these communicative events. It started with a series of communicative events (sharing information about ColLaboratoire 2020, getting expressions of interest to join, planning, etc.). Through these communicative events, collaboration among people was initiated. People interacted with one another (giving suggestions, agreeing or disagreeing on particular suggestions, planning, deciding, etc.), which contributed to accomplishing a common goal. These communicative acts continued, there were a series of understandings and misunderstandings, and decisions were made, thus resulting in the formation of a CoP.

The process is cyclical as it continues from one CoP to another by starting again through communication. As observed in this study's series of communicative acts, ColLaboratoire 2020 started because of its predecessor, a summer school done in UoP. The collaborators had known one another since then. Some of the mentors/facilitators were also part of that summer school. All mentors/facilitators are affiliated with any of these major collaborators. The ColLaboratoire 2020 emanated from the communicative acts done by these collaborators. As ColLaboratoire 2020 has ended, it can be said that this will continue as another CoP because right after the event, the collaborators started discussing their plans for the next activity. If only there's no pandemic, another training should have been done this year based on that discussion.



The 3Cs Leading to Development

As this study subscribed to the CCO approach and proved that organization indeed emerged from communication, it also forwards that development emerges from communication. As also shown in the figure, the 3Cs (communication, collaboration, and community of practice) revolve around the concept of development; meaning, all 3Cs have one common goal: development.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The CoP was created through communication through various communicative events. These communicative events led to the development of mnemonics called **COLLABORATION** (Courting, Obliging, Levelling-Off, Liaison, Acceptance, Boodle fight, Organized,

Acknowledgement, Tenacity, Integrity, Ownership, and Nourishing). These stages in forming an online organization are imperatives for an organization to sustain and survive. These resulted in the formulation of a model that describes the communication process as constitutive of organization. It focused on three concepts called the 3Cs: communication, collaboration, and community of practice, applying Luhmann's communicative constitution of organization approach.

In this study, the community of practice has represented the "organization" in the communicative constitution of "organization" approach. The series of evidence presented in this paper shows that Community of Practice (ColLaboratoire 2020) has emerged through collaboration generated by communication. As this study subscribed to the CCO approach and proved that organization indeed emerged from communication, it also forwards that development emerges from communication; and that collaboration is an integral part of the DevCom practice.

Going back to Quebral's (2012) definition of DevCom, ColLaboratoire 2020 qualifies as an example of application or practice of the said discipline. For one, this CoP "*applied the science of human communication.*" Being the main unit of analysis of this study, the importance of communication in the emergence of ColLaboratoire 2020 has been forwarded: "*Communication does not only express social reality but also created it.*" As ColLaboratoire 2020 attempted to address specific UN SDGs, the CoP's target was definitely "*linked to the transitioning of communities*" by "*unfolding of individual potential.*" The CoP (ColLaboratoire 2020) aspired to train the fellows to apply "*imaginative, methodologically innovative, and radically multidisciplinary approaches to UN SDG-related research challenges.*" Thus, with all these conditions met, ColLaboratoire 2020 is development communication.

The realization that communication plays a vital role in the emergence of an organization provides a deeper understanding of its importance in the practice and theory of development communication. With its participatory nature, collaboration is an integral part of DevCom. Thus, a better understanding of the concept and how collaborations are formed is necessary.

This study described the communicative events that led to the organization's development as **COLLABORATION** (Courting, Obliging, Levelling-Off, Liaison, Acceptance, Boodle fight, Organized, Acknowledgement, Tenacity, Integrity, Ownership, and Nourishing).

Recommendations

For future research. Consider conducting an evaluative study on ColLaboratoire 2020 focusing on the lessons learned and best practices. This can be used as a guide by those planning to implement the same development assistance project.

Employ retrospective analysis on the practice of DevCom, which can further prove that collaboration is essential in the DevCom practice. This will be an essential concept that can be added to the literature of DevCom.

For the Development Communication Program. Integrate a course on collaboration or as one of the topics in a related course. This will ensure that DevCom graduates will have the knowledge and skills needed to practice their careers.

For policy in academe-private-industry partnership. Continue engaging in collaborative projects. Development assistance projects of the same nature will benefit the academic sector. This will help increase the knowledge production that can serve as a guide or reference materials for their teaching. The partnership can also broaden the body of knowledge of a developing field like development communication.

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